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'WESTERN WANDERINGS.'<sup>1</sup>

BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

II.

WE went to see a baseball game at New York—a first-class match, as we should say—or 'some ball,' as a native expert described it. I looked on it all with the critical but sympathetic eyes of an experienced though decrepit cricketer. The men were fine fellows, harder looking than most of our professionals—indeed they train continually, and some of the teams have to practise complete abstinence, which is said to show its good results not so much in physical fitness as in the mental quickness which is very essential in the game. The catching seemed to me extraordinarily good, especially the judging of the long catches by the 'bleachers,' as the outfielders who are far from any shade are called. The throwing in is also remarkably hard and accurate, and, if applied to cricket, would astonish some of our batsmen. The men earn anything from a thousand to fifteen hundred pounds in the season. This money question is a weak point of the game, as it is among our own soccer clubs, since it means that the largest purse has the best team, and there is no necessary relation between the player and the place he plays for. Thus we looked upon New York defeating the Philadelphia Athletics, but there was no more reason to suppose that New York had actually produced one team than that Philadelphia had produced the other. For this reason the smaller matches, such as are played between local teams or colleges, seem to me to be more exciting, as they do represent something definite.

The pitcher is the man who commands the highest salary and has mastered the hardest part of the game. His pace is remarkable,

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far faster, I should say, than any bowling; but of course it is a throw, and as such would not be possible in the cricket field. I had one uneasy moment when I was asked in Canada to take the bat and open a baseball game. The pitcher, fortunately, was merciful, and the ball came swift but true. I steadied myself by trying to imagine that it was a bat which I held in my grasp and that this was a full toss, which asked to be hit over the ropes. Fortunately, I got it fairly in the middle and it went on its appointed way. But I should not care to have to duplicate the performance.

There are many strong arguments for baseball, and I wonder that it has not caught on more rapidly in England. First of all, the whole match can be played out in a single evening, and that is a very great advantage. Secondly, it needs no specially prepared ground, but can be played on any fairly level field or common. Thirdly, it costs little in the way of outfit. These are great virtues, and when one adds that it is a game which works the audience up to a state of frenzied excitement, and that there is to the expert never a dull moment, it is clear that we should find a place for it among our sports. The tactics of the rooters or fans are the only things which an outsider can find to criticise. So long as they cheer their own side no one can blame them, but when their yells are for the purpose of rattling the other side they offend against our conceptions of sport. However, I fear there are cricket grounds in England where such tactics have not been unknown.

This morning of early June 'my Lady Sunshine' and I—(if I may be allowed to quote the charmingly appropriate name which the New York Press has given to my wife) are leaving New York for Parkman Land, which I have long wished to explore. But 'right here,' as he would say himself, I should like to say a few words upon the ubiquitous and energetic American reporter.

He is really, in nine cases out of ten, a very good fellow, and if you will treat him with decent civility he will make the best of you with the public. It is absurd for travellers to be rude to him, as is too often the attitude of the wandering Briton. The man is under orders from his paper, and if he returns without results it is not a compliment upon his delicacy which will await him. He is out to see you and describe you, and if he finds you an ill-tempered, cantankerous curmudgeon, he very naturally says so and turns out some excellent spicy reading at your expense. The indignant Briton imagines that this is done in revenge. The reporter would not be human if it did not amuse him to do it, but it very often represents the exact impression which the vituperative traveller



has made upon the pressman, himself as often as not an overworked and highly-strung man.

The public demand to know something of the stranger within their gate. Therefore the editor and his reporter have got to get their information. So far is reasonable. But it is the utter want of system which makes the practice a most unending and intolerable nuisance. There are, we will say, forty papers or press agencies which wish to see you. They come separately and at all hours. You are never free from them. They take you often when you are tired out and incapable of giving your best. They have developed into so formidable a nuisance that to my knowledge they keep out of America very many of that type of Englishman whom the American would most desire to see in his country.

Might I make a suggestion to the American Press? It is quite possible to reconcile their admitted rights on one side, and the reasonable convenience of travellers upon the other. Let the interview be regularised. When the stranger arrives let him be permitted to name a time and place where he will meet the Press. A formal card could be handed to him on which he records the appointment. There let him give himself up for an hour or so to anyone who desires to see or to ask. After that let it be recognised that he has passed the literary customs, and that no one else has any possible right to examine his mental baggage. It would surely be an easier way for the Press, and it would be infinitely so for the traveller.

I can assert that with confidence, as on my first visit to America, it was so arranged for me by Major Pond. I was turned loose in a room full of journalists, like a rat among terriers. However, that finished my troubles, whereas on this recent visit I have never been able to get to the end.

One great advantage of such an organisation as I suggest would be that there would be some controlling authority to keep reporters to the truth. It might be arranged that, when a stranger could prove that a journalist had deliberately invented some lying statement about him, the man's name or the paper's name could for a time be struck off the list. Too often, I imagine, the unhappy reporter is instructed to furnish not only an interview but a sensation. One New York paper, for example—it was the *New York Journal*—quoted me as having stated not only that the militant suffragettes should be lynched, but that I was ready to join the lynching party. I certainly have no liking for these people, but that I should utter such a ruffianly sentiment was an entire invention, which I took the first opportunity of publicly denying. It is



the kind of incident which would be prevented by the presence of some external control.

Reminiscences of interviews are occasionally amusing. I can remember that on my previous visit I was approached one night by an interviewer in a very marked state of intoxication. He was so drunk that I wondered what in the world he would make of his subject, and I bought his paper next day to see. To my amusement I found that I had made the worst possible impression upon him. He had found no good in me at all. He may even have attributed to me his own weakness, like the Scotch toper who said, 'Sandy drank that hard that by the end of the evening I couldn't see him.'

I have said that we are starting for Parkman Land. Now, as I continue to write, I am just emerging from that enchanted country. I am surprised to find how few American and fewer Canadians there are who appreciate that great historian at his true worth. I wonder whether any man of letters has ever devoted himself to a task with such whole-hearted devotion as Parkman. He knew the old bloody frontier as Scott knew the border marches. He was soaked in New England tradition. He prepared himself for writing about Indians by living for months in their wigwams. He was intimate with old French life, and he spent some time in a religious house that he might catch something of the spirit which played so great a part in the early history of Canada. On the top of all this he had the well-balanced, unprejudiced mind of the great chronicler, and he cultivated a style which was equally removed from insipidity and from affectation. As to his industry and resolution, they are shown by the fact that he completed his volumes after he had been stricken by blindness. It is hard to name any historian who has such an equipment as this. From his 'Pioneers of the New World' to his 'Conspiracy of Pontiac' I have read his twelve volumes twice over, and when I get back to my study, with these recollections fresh in my mind, I shall assuredly read them yet again.

We have spent a day at Fort William Henry, at the southern end of Lake George. The lake is not unlike Windermere in size and shape. If one could imagine a British fort at Windermere, while the French and Indians held Keswick in force and lurked in the woods as far south as Ambleside, it would give a general idea of this cockpit of North America. This fort was a Castle Perilous, often attempted, finally taken, when in 1759 on that old corduroy road now hard to trace among the brushwood, the Indian devils got in among the unarmed prisoners and murdered so many of them, to the lasting discredit of Montcalm. Both sides sank pretty



low in this conflict, for the British Colonials did not hesitate to take scalps. But the lowest of all were surely those French priests who encouraged their Mission Indians, even in time of peace, to commit atrocities upon the settlers. Parkman gives actual documents which leave no doubt as to the facts. On the other hand, the bravery and nobility of some other French priests, of Fathers Jogue, Lallemand, and Brebœuf, reach the limit of human capacity. How they strove and worked and suffered, and how utterly futile have all their labours proved, except as an example of unselfish toil! No results of any sort remain save for one little handful of Christian Hurons at Lorette near Quebec, who are lineally descended from the old Missions. Soon they also will have passed, and the whole sad, heroic, useless chapter will be ended.

We went over the ground to the south of the old fort where in one single day—I think it was in 1757—no less than three separate battles were fought. In the first, the British, sallying out to meet an invading army of French and Indians, fell into the usual ambush and were defeated. In the second, the French and Indians, having followed the British up to their entrenched camp, were in turn put to flight and their general wounded and taken. Finally, an independent body of the French, coming up in the evening and ignorant of all that happened, were overwhelmed and their bodies thrown into what is still known as the Bloody Pond, a quiet little lakelet beside the road. There was a ruffian of the days of Edward the Third who boasted that he never went to sleep until he 'had fought his fill.' I fancy Johnson's men must have fought their fill that day.

The verandah of the Fort William Hotel is certainly a spot on which to smoke and dream. The lake lies before you as it has always done, though the woods, I take it, are a second growth and lower than of old. Down this majestic water avenue one can see sweeping the pageant of that romantic invading army at which Munro and his comrades gazed in astonishment and despair. A thousand canoes spanned the lake from shore to shore and bore a host of Indian warriors, the pick of the tribes from Quebec in the East to Thunder Bay on the far side of Lake Superior. Behind were the boats which contained the white-coated regulars of France, the rude Canadian Militia under their Seigneurs, and finally, in double boats, the artillery and the gunners. A fine flotilla of the dead to conjure up on this calm summer evening as you stand even where the garrison stood as they surveyed them. It was the same garrison who were massacred a week or two later upon the old corduroy road.



There is blood in the air here, for all the still peace of nature. You see that pretty woody island—Diamond Island it is called. There a picnic of officers and their wives was held many a year ago. Forgetting the flight of time, they lingered until at last they heard the evening gun from the fort boom across the waters. There was no further admittance, so they determined to spend the night where they were. It was a time of nominal peace, but there was never real peace on the bloody frontier. A lynx-eyed Canadian *coursur des bois* had seen them from the forest. He summoned his Indian murderers. They paddled softly across in the darkness, and the sleepers had a horrible awakening. None returned to the fort.

We have explored not only the beautiful tragic Lake George, but also its great neighbour Lake Champlain, almost as full of historical reminiscence. Upon this, level with the head of the smaller lake, stood Ticonderoga, the chief seat of the French Canadian power. Some five miles separate it from Lake George, up which the British came buzzing whenever they were strong enough to do so. Once in front of the palisades of Ticonderoga, they met with heavy defeat, and yet once again, by the valour of the newly-enrolled Black Watch, they swept the place off the map. I wonder if Stevenson had actually been here before he wrote his eerie haunting ballad—the second finest of the sort, in my opinion, in our literature. It is more than likely, since he spent some time in the neighbouring Adirondacks. Pious hands are now restoring the old fort of Ticonderoga, much of which has been uncovered. All day we skirted Lake Champlain, into which the old French explorer first found his way, and where he made the dreadful mistake of mixing in Indian warfare, which brought the whole bloodthirsty vendetta of the five nations upon the young French settlements. Up at the head of the lake we saw Plattsburg, where the Americans gained a victory in the war of 1812. The sight of these battle-fields, whether they mark British or American successes, always fills me with horror. If the war of 1776 was, as I hold, a glorious mistake, that of 1812 was a senseless blunder. Had neither occurred, the whole of North America would now be one magnificent undivided country, pursuing its own independent destiny, and yet united in such unblemished ties of blood and memory to the old country that each could lean at all times upon the other. It is best for Britishers, no doubt, that we should never lean upon anything bigger than ourselves. But I see no glory in these struggles, and little wisdom in the statesmen who waged them. Among them they split the race from base to summit, and who has been



the gainer? Not Britain, who was alienated from so many of her very best children. Not America, who lost Canada and had on her hands a civil war which a United Empire could have avoided. Ah well, there is a controlling force somewhere, and the highest wisdom is to believe that all things are ordered for the best.

About evening we crossed the Canadian frontier, the Richelieu River, down which the old Iroquois scalping parties used to creep, gleaming coldly in the twilight. There is nothing to show where you have crossed that border. There is the same sort of country, the same cultivation, the same plain wooden houses. Nothing is changed save that suddenly I see a little old ensign flying on a gable, and it gives you a thrill when you have not seen it for a time—God bless it!—but God bless also the kindly flag to the South.

Things are not well with Montreal. It pains a Briton to have to say so when it is the first British city to which he comes. But things are not well with it. The visitor has realised that before he has got from the station to his hotel. It is rich and should be prosperous, the busy port of a great country. But the streets are in a bad state, and everywhere one sees signs of neglect. One important street has been up, as I am credibly informed, for four years. Is it incompetence, or is it the old enemy 'graft'? It is not for a stranger to say. No one admires the French Canadian race more than I do, and I was grieved to hear that the guilty town council are nearly all of that race. I wish some high-nosed old Governor of their own breed could come back to deal with them—de Frontenac for choice. It would not be long before the City Fathers would be testing one of their own institutions. My only day in the town was a cheerless one, with rain above, mud below, fog over all, and an after-luncheon speech to deliver, so perhaps the gloom has reached my thoughts, and things may seem other when I visit the town on my return.

There is an organisation called the Canadian Club, which is a terror to the visitor. It is ubiquitous and heads him off in every direction, asking him for an address. Up to now I have had such invitations from Quebec, Montreal, Hamilton, Vancouver, Fort William, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, and several more. I have actually accepted in the case of Montreal, Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Ottawa. In each case the procedure is the same—a short lunch and then a speech, which is supposed to cover half an hour. One is left with very mixed feelings over the business, since on the one hand it is honourable that these kind people should desire to hear from you, while on the other your holiday jaunt changes



suddenly into a lecture tour, unless you discriminate, and if you do discriminate you find it hard not to give offence. On the whole it is best to sacrifice your holiday to some extent and give of your best, such as it is. You will find in return a warm welcome and a surprisingly indulgent and sympathetic audience.

Canada within recent memory was, outside the old provinces, a land of wild animals and their trappers, with a single thin belt of humanity across it. This loosely-connected community was clamped together by the steel of the Canadian Pacific. But the country was still length without breadth. Now the map has been rolled back. The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway has put a fresh girdle round the country, and the Canadian Northern promises yet a third. In England we have come to understand what an enormously important Imperial asset the Canadian Pacific has been. But I do not think that we have realised yet what the Grand Trunk Pacific stands for. Crossing the prairie a good deal to the north of the line of the Canadian Pacific, it has opened up a vast stretch of country which was useless before. The recent joining up of the lines from East to West marked the triumphant end of a campaign against nature quite as important to the Empire as many a military campaign. Never, until you follow such a railway in its early days, do you realise how civilisation and even life itself spring from that Aaron's rod of steel.

Five years ago there was hardly a townlet, save Edmonton, in the thousand-mile stretch between Winnipeg and the Rockies. Only five years ago. Now there are fifty, only villages as yet, but with the seeds of growth in all, and of greatness in some. They toe the line—the iron line—like a string of runners starting upon a race. Already you can see which is making a good start and which a bad. Each is the centre for a circumference of farm land, and on this depends the advance of the town. Biggar and Scott and Wainwright and Watrous catch the eye for the moment, but there are plenty of likely outsiders, and it's the riding that does it. A big man can at any time make a big town. At present they are very much alike—the little wooden church, the raw hotel, a couple of stores, a red-painted livery stable, and a dozen houses. On the horizon here and there one sees far-off farm buildings, but beyond them and away fifty miles over the horizon there are others, and others, and yet others, for whom this townlet and the railway line mean life and the world.

*(To be continued.)*



### THE TRENCHES IN THEIR MAKING.

*No one anticipated that, within a few months, the campaign in the West would assume the form of trench warfare on a gigantic scale. It was expected that sieges would have to be undertaken, although our preparations in peace time had not included any considerable provision for such operations; but that the two largest armies which have ever met in the field would find themselves confronting each other at close quarters in defensive lines thrown up ad hoc over a length of 250 miles was not realised. Whether the Germans had any clearer prevision of this contingency is not certain; but at least they were perfectly equipped with heavy artillery and bomb-throwing mortars admirably adapted to the conditions which have arisen. They quickly showed proficiency in all the technicalities of trench-work, and they, therefore, secured some initial advantage. Our text-books were sound in principle; but they did not contemplate all the minor artifices which German thoroughness in detail had evolved, and our troops have been obliged to learn by experience much that was new and unpleasant. The following article was written at my suggestion by my late A.D.C. Captain C. T. Davis of the 107th Pioneers, who came home wounded after having gained practical knowledge of the trench warfare still in progress. It is of vital importance that our forces now in training should, as far as possible, be instructed in the methods by which unnecessary losses can be avoided; and Captain Davis's practical hints deserve to be read by all who are preparing to bear the grave responsibility of directing the work of our gallant troops at the Front.*

SYDENHAM OF COMBE.

January 5, 1915.

THE British Army excels in 'the open.' Unfortunately, our opponent has gone 'to ground.' However, we still hope for a day when we may drive him into the open and show him what we can do in the way of elastic formations and fire-control. Till then, we must patiently continue siege warfare in trenches. To the uninitiated, fighting in trenches may bring visions of gramophones, pianos, plum puddings, and two hot meals a day. These are



illusions. True, the old soldier makes himself comfortable without loss of efficiency wherever he is, and a good regiment with clever management may supply a hot meal to the men ; but, as a rule, trench life means twenty-four hours at least of the severest strain. Cold, wet, mud, darkness, and lack of sleep are the main hardships. The soldier carries into the trenches with him his food for one day, and if his stay exceeds twenty-four hours his next day's food is brought out to him at night. In the daytime he is subjected to spells of fire from artillery or mortars, while rifle and machine-gun fire is ceaseless. In some places, where the enemy have sapped up close, there is also a continuous shower of hand-bombs and grenades. In other cases the enemy may have succeeded in mining our trenches from their sap-head, and blowing in a portion of them. This siege warfare therefore frequently resolves itself into a series of very close combats. The enemy blows you out of a portion of your trench and occupies it during the daytime, while at night he is counter-attacked and driven out of it again—at the point of the bayonet. In these circumstances the soldier has not much leisure to enjoy gramophones and plum puddings.

The importance of the construction of trenches cannot be exaggerated. In the present war it has frequently been stated that the soldier values his entrenching tool almost as much as his rifle. What Tommy Atkins's exact feelings are, it is ever hard to say ; but it is certain that he does not regard the spade with as much disfavour as in peace time. He has come to realise that a little earth is often the only thing that stands between him and death, but a little earth is not always enough. Those who have been to the Front cannot fail to have been impressed with the courage of the British soldier. He is brave beyond words ; but occasionally he is brave to a fault. It is the duty of a soldier to die willingly ; but it is not his duty to die unnecessarily or foolishly. Lives often have to be sacrificed in an attack ; but the *raison d'être* of trenches is to minimise losses. Now a 'die-hard' will sometimes sit in an inadequate trench quite cheerfully because he is not afraid ; he will not take the trouble to improve it because he considers it is good enough to protect him from the enemy in his front. This is a splendid spirit, and it is a delicate question how to insist on the combination of caution with courage. Another difficulty that besets us is that digging is apt to be looked down upon because it is considered a feat that requires no skill. This is a great fallacy ;



and, perhaps, if the soldier came to realise that a good digger was as rare as a marksman, and nearly as useful, he might take more pride in trench-work. The quality of a regiment at the Front can be easily gauged by the trenches they have dug. There are regiments who are extremely proud of their trenches. One such regiment, which really had dug admirable trenches, were determined to hold them even though the evacuation of a portion of the line on their flank, which had become untenable, was contemplated. They built a bastion on the weak flank, loop-holed the rear face of the fire-trench, and were quite happy to stay where they were. Their scheme was slightly modified, but they did remain where they were.

Much has been written about entrenchments lately—some of it misleading and pernicious—accompanied by diagrams of prehistoric trenches, which the reader is asked to accept as the latest designs. If the following notes succeed in eradicating some of this rubbish they will have accomplished their purpose. They are meant only as hints to platoon and company commanders of the Army in preparation, who may not have been fortunate enough to have had previous experience of warfare, and, taken in conjunction with the knowledge they will have gleaned from the text-books, may prove helpful. It must be remembered that the line the Allies hold on the west is over 250 miles long, that conditions vary considerably, and one writer can only have experience of a small portion of this front. The notes are written from experience gained in a flat country on clay soil, but many of the guiding principles must hold good everywhere.

Digging trenches at the Front is so different from the study of them in peace that the soldier must not be disheartened. Peace study gives him an ideal that it is rarely possible to achieve. Darkness, fatigue, and the enemy's fire are the chief disturbing factors constituting the difference between digging-operations in peace and in war. Darkness and fatigue may be introduced to a certain extent in peace; but the moral effect of digging under fire can only be realised in war.

The three following considerations should still govern the siting of trenches: (a) Fire-effect, *i.e.* a good field of fire and scope for the free use of the rifle; (b) cover from view; (c) protection from fire.

It is important to remember that, owing to air-craft and the



improvement in observation, a trench with a long field of fire must be carefully concealed to avoid destruction by artillery. For this reason our trenches have often been placed on the reverse slope of a hill with a short field of fire. This position protects the defenders from shell-fire, but enables the enemy to sap up to short ranges, whence they can make use of trench-mortars and hand-grenades or bombs. In the latter case the enemy usually get so close that they mask the fire of their own guns. The platoon or company commander will seldom have to decide on the site of his trench: he is only a pawn in a colossal game, and will generally have to dig his trench wherever it happens to come in the big scheme. Now let us try to trace the various steps that bring a trench into existence. A line is engaged with the enemy, either attacking or retiring; there is a check, and the natural thing is at once to throw up some cover. Out come the entrenching implements—a short little tool, one side pick the other side hoe, which every soldier carries—and each man begins to dig and scrape till he has got sufficient earth to give him protection from fire for his head and shoulders; being under fire he of course digs lying down. It may be decided to hold the line, in which case it becomes necessary to turn this hasty entrenchment into a fire-trench, and here some care and thought must be exercised. Experience has shown that the best fire-trench is a deep and narrow one, with traverses at short intervals. An ideal trench is four feet three inches deep, three feet wide the earth being spread so that the parapet does not exceed nine inches in height. It should be traversed every six or eight yards, the traverses being not less than six feet wide. These traverses are most important, because they localise the effect of a shell or bomb falling in the trench, and also provide protection from oblique or enfilade machine-gun and rifle fire. In order to turn the hasty entrenchment into a fire-trench of this kind, the soldier continues to dig lying down till he has excavated sufficient earth to form a trench from which he can fire kneeling. He then proceeds to dig kneeling till the trench is completed. If the hostile fire is severe it will be impossible to lay out traverses in the initial stages, and the question of vital importance will be to get down deep quickly. The men will usually be in extended order when the work is begun; so what really happens is that each man digs a pit for himself, and these rifle-pits are afterwards connected and form a continuous fire-trench. To return to the question of traverses. They are



imperative in a fire-trench, and it is very much more difficult to add them to a completed trench than to start them from the beginning. They should therefore be begun when joining up the rifle-pits.

In the case of a company digging trenches when not engaged with the enemy, a percentage of large picks and shovels will be available, and the work may consist of a fire-trench, support-trench, or communication-trench. The company is usually taken from the reserve and marched out to the position. In this case, too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of secrecy, which means not only silence in work and getting to positions, but also means a careful watch on the background.

On one occasion some companies were working on a second line about 800 yards in rear of the first line. They began work at 1 P.M. and, being favoured by a background of trees, hedges, and a village, in conjunction with a dull, drizzly day, they worked without interference for over two hours. Suddenly, artillery opened fire on them—not a round every few seconds, but shells which swept along the whole line as though fired by a maxim. Luckily the Germans in this instance used common shell instead of shrapnel, so that the diggers, who at once lay down in the trench, were scarcely touched. The reason for this sudden attention became apparent later. The men digging, being engrossed in their work and keeping a watch to their front, had not noticed the sky behind them. Overhead it was still clouded, but in rear the heavens were preparing for a sunset. This had evidently thrown the working party up in relief and attracted the attention of the Germans.

At night the same danger is to be looked for in the rear in the shape of burning houses or haystacks, which may show up a working party in silhouette and cause heavy losses.

When working in the darkness an article of great importance, which is frequently overlooked, is a tracing-tape. It is certainly worth more than one pick and is infinitely lighter to carry. A tracing-tape saves a great deal of time and avoids much confusion at night.

If due precautions are taken, and proper stealth is observed, it is possible to dig a line of trench at night within a hundred and fifty yards of the enemy without incurring serious losses.

When the trench has been dug to the dimensions suggested, it must not be imagined that the work is completed, for there are



several additions that are necessary to enable it to be occupied for any length of time. Some further protection from the searching effect of shrapnel or bombs is necessary. If the ground is sufficiently firm it is possible to under-cut the front face of the trench and form what is known as a 'dug-out.' The earth is scooped out carefully so that the soldier can curl himself up and snuggle into the excavation, which should be slightly higher than the bottom of the trench to keep out water. When digging in clay, these dug-outs form warm little shelters from the cold, especially if some dry straw is placed in the bottom and a water-proof sheet pegged across the outside. Care should be taken that too much earth is not scooped away, because several instances have occurred in which a bomb has struck the parapet, and the top of the dug-out has fallen in and killed the occupant.

Bomb-proofs are often used in place of dug-outs. They consist of an L-shaped trench dug into the rear face of the fire-trench; the sides of the L being made any convenient length—usually about ten feet. The portion parallel to the fire-trench is covered with timber and earth, thus forming a shelter to which men can retire during an artillery bombardment. The more earth above the bomb-proof the better the protection; but it should not be allowed to become a mark. These forms of shelter are specially useful when there is no second line parallel to the fire-trench in which men can obtain cover during artillery fire.

The next point is head-cover. This is a delicate question, on which opinions differ—as some officers do not approve of head-cover. The ordinary loop-hole certainly gives much protection to men on look-out; it also has a beneficial moral effect; but, on the other hand, it restricts the free use of the rifle and makes advance from the trench more difficult. A bad loop-hole is considerably worse than none. For a good loop-hole the parapet must be at least four feet thick at the top. A platform for the firer must be made alongside so that he can fire over the top of the parapet in an emergency. In making loop-holes with sandbags it must be remembered that one sandbag is not sufficient to stop a German bullet; many men have been shot through a sandbag. On one occasion a platoon of a famous Scotch regiment made a brilliant sortie at night on a German sap. In the morning the infuriated Germans retaliated by turning their machine-guns on to the head-cover that the Scotch regiment had erected to their trenches. The cover was not sufficiently thick, with the result that the machine-guns sliced it away as though it were cheese.



Closely connected with head-cover are look-outs. There are many kinds, which it would not be well to mention ; but there is one simple form that may perhaps be spoken of and that is an oblique look-out. The sentry on the right has his head-cover of earth cut obliquely looking to the left, and the sentry on the left *vice versa*. So that one sentry really watches the front of the other. In this way the whole of the front can be watched without the sentry being exposed to frontal fire.

Now trench-work is so great a strain that it is necessary frequently to relieve the troops in the firing-line. With deep, narrow trenches there is much difficulty in carrying out a relief at night. The large packs that men carry make it hard for them to pass one another, and this, combined with the darkness, causes delay and confusion.

To widen the trench would be to make it more vulnerable. It is a good plan, therefore, in a narrow trench, to make passing stations every few yards by scooping out the rear face of the trench. In taking over a trench it is the first duty of every soldier to examine his parapet or loop-hole and alter it, if necessary, to suit his own height. A short man, who has relieved a tall man and has not taken this precaution, may find in a crisis that he can only fire at the sky.

A communication-trench should be zigzagged, as directed in the text-books ; but care should also be taken that a stretcher can pass the corners.

Troops at the front are now being supplied with charcoal or coke to burn in the trenches. This is not only a great protection against the cold, but is useful for heating food or making tea. An old bucket, with air-holes punched into it, forms an admirable receptacle for this purpose. Any amount of old iron pans, suitable for a brazier, can be picked up from ruined farm-houses.

The drainage of trenches is a difficult problem. If it is not possible to carry off the water by the usual system of drains leading to lower ground, then a small drain should be dug in the rear of the trench, with a soak-pit at intervals from which the water can be bailed out if necessary.

Some men have a chameleon-like gift for concealing themselves, or their trenches, while others seem to be extraordinarily lacking in perception. To escape observation it is necessary to assimilate the works to the surrounding landscape. If a trench is being dug through a turnip-field it is simple to place turnips on the excavated



earth and thereby conceal it; but small precautions like this are frequently neglected. An incident illustrating the value of invisibility occurred in the case of a machine-gun section. It had chosen a good position among some saplings and bushes, which did not interfere with its operations. For two days the section worked well without being located; but the commander, in an excess of zeal, cut down the saplings on the second night to make some overhead cover, with the result that next morning the position was located and destroyed by artillery. 'Leave well alone' is a maxim that often applies to concealment.

C. T. DAVIS.



## ROBERT HUGH BENSON.

## SOME EARLY MEMORIES.

77 My friendship with Hugh Benson began at Cambridge, where we both entered Trinity College in the autumn of 1890. I do not remember how or when we came to know each other, but it must have been in our first term, because we both took part, as Citizens of Delphi, in the 'Ion' of Euripides, which was performed at the end of that term. I remember his appearance at that time very well. He seemed more of a school-boy than the average freshman, with a tangled mop of fair hair, quick stammering speech, and a shy but attractive manner. He was small and light, always walked very fast, and appeared to be busy.

Trinity is a very large college, and it is possible to know a man of one's own standing there for some time before discovering the ground of exceptional intimacy. This must have happened in our case, for I have no outstanding recollections of Hugh Benson during the first eighteen months of our residence at the University. In the spring of 1892 I left Cambridge for a year, to take up a tutorship. I lived in a cottage in Kent, and during that summer Hugh and another Cambridge friend came down to spend a Sunday with me. After a long walk through lovely country, and in lovely weather, we found ourselves sitting in the garden of Sundridge Rectory, which was held at that time by the Rev. E. H. Parry, now Bishop of Guiana. He was a bachelor, and after directing us to the strawberry beds, and to chairs under a great tree on the lawn, he went off to his schools, leaving us free of the house and garden till his return.

Sundridge Rectory is one of the most characteristic English country parsonages that I know of, and we talked of how delightful clerical life might be in such a place. Hugh was preparing to take Orders then, and thought that he might possibly ask his father to present him to the living of Sundridge, if Mr. Parry should ever vacate it. But he said that what he should really like to be was a Cardinal.

I went back to Cambridge for the summer term of 1893, which was Hugh's last, and during that term we were a great deal together. We both had literary ambitions. Or rather, both of us thought that it would be nice to write stories, and get money for them. We



did write a joint one, and I have the manuscript somewhere still. It was a very poor story, but contained a few gleams of observation. It must have been a year or so after this that Hugh finished a novel, and it was a very bad novel, ending up with the violent death of all the chief characters. I said that this scene was not led up to in any way, and therefore missed fire. Hugh said that it was a very effective scene, and therefore couldn't miss fire. But the novel was never published. Looking back, it seems to me that both of us showed exceptionally small promise in those days of ever doing anything with fiction. I think that Hugh's first impulse came from the necessity that it was for him always to be doing something with a pen. Later on, he plunged deeply into life, and his craftsmanship fitted itself to his knowledge.

But one clever piece of work I remember of his in that summer term at Cambridge. Sundry high-conditioned undergraduates, with names now well known in public life, carried out a prank which brought them into collision with the authorities of both town and University. Hugh contributed a poem, entitled 'A Scandal in High Life,' to one of the ephemeral undergraduate journals that was then running its light-hearted course. It was remarkably well written, in the style of Pope, and its thinly-veiled points were so sharp that they aroused the ire of one of the gentlemen concerned, who made determined efforts to discover its authorship, but without success.

The spring and summer of 1893 were exceptionally hot. Hugh and I spent a great deal of our time in a Canadian canoe on the 'Backs.' He must have been reading for his Tripos during the early part of the term, and perhaps read for it as we reclined at either end of our canoe; but I seem to remember that we pursued our joint literary efforts then. There is one spot on that delicious stretch of river that I shall always connect with him. We used to lie under the bank opposite King's Chapel, within view of Clare Bridge and College, and the willows of Trinity beyond. It is as fair a scene as any in England, and redeems the memory of our idleness.

Hugh 'kept,' as the Cambridge phrase goes, in rooms in the Great Court of Trinity, which to those who have enjoyed that privilege is another unforgettable memory of youth. They were on the ground floor of the east side, and he shared them with a cat, which he called a kitten. They had a faint aroma on that account, but he met the objection by denying it. This was in his last year.



Previously to that he had occupied rooms in Garrett's Hostel. A poor fellow had gone out of his mind and shot himself in these rooms, and Hugh had immediately got leave to move into them. He hoped that he might see his predecessor's ghost. He owned that if he had done so he would have been very much frightened, but he would point with awed pride to the mark of the bullet on the bedroom door. This story got about, and brought him some notoriety. It was also currently reported amongst those who did not know him that 'Benson smoked green tea.' I think he had once done so in somebody's rooms to see what it was like. He was amused by his reputation for eccentricity, but inclined to be a little proud of it too.

When he left Cambridge he went for a year to read theology with Dean Vaughan at Llandaff. This very remarkable man had for many years directed a sort of informal post-graduate theological college, and at the time of his death, which took place about four years later, some hundreds of the English clergy had passed through it. The life was freer than at the ordinary theological college; the men lived in rooms near the Deanery, and looked to the Dean for direction in their studies. I suppose Dean Vaughan would have been called a liberal-evangelical, but he stamped no mark of any school upon his scholars, who were, and are, to be found in all schools of the Church. What he did stamp upon them was the mark of his own beautiful spirit. I used to think in after years that Hugh had not caught it so well as others of them that I had met with, for there were times during the later phases of his development when he would acknowledge no righteousness outside his own beliefs. But when those beliefs had finally crystallised, and there was no longer any doubt where he stood himself, he seemed to acquire a larger tolerance, or, as I like to think, returned to the tolerance that he had learnt under the Dean. One of the last letters that I had from him, not many months before his death, was in acknowledgment of a book I had sent him. It was a story of religious experience, of which the plain moral was that charity is a greater thing than creed. His letter began: 'Your book has come; and I like it *enormously*. It is gentle and Christian and interesting and happy.' I am quite sure that fifteen years ago he would have argued hotly with me about it.

Until Archbishop Benson died, three years after Hugh went down from Cambridge, I was very frequently at Lambeth Palace, and at Addington Park in Surrey, which was then the country seat of the



Archbishops of Canterbury. Some of the happiest days and weeks I have to look back upon were spent in those two houses. The Archbishop liked to see young people about him in his few hours of leisure, and showed them great kindness and courtesy. As for Mrs. Benson, it is difficult to speak of her kindness in even terms. Hugh and I were like two school-boys home for the holidays, for whose pleasure she was always devising something fresh. If there was a state dinner party at which our presence was not desired, or she and the Archbishop were dining out, she would pack us off to a play in one of the Archiepiscopal carriages. And we used to steal out sometimes, though not in such state, to go to the Surrey-side theatres, in those days still the home of blood-curdling melodrama, from which we derived great amusement. I can see Mrs. Benson shaking with laughter at Hugh's descriptions of our experiences. She was always ready to sit and talk with us; she was as young as we were, and we were very young then, even for our years.

The smoking-room at Lambeth was said to have been Cranmer's bedroom. It was in the ancient part of the Palace, and there was a way from it to the organ-loft of the chapel, in which one or both of us usually played at the morning and evening services. Hugh found the proximity convenient, for he was a great cigarette smoker.

We were both very fond of Church music, and were sometimes admitted into the organ-loft of St. Paul's Cathedral. And for two years we carried wands as Stewards on the great occasion of the rendering of Bach's Passion Music in the Cathedral.

But our happiest times together were spent at Addington. Once or twice we rode down there from Lambeth, and on one of those occasions, while passing through the crowded streets of Vauxhall, Hugh discovered himself to be on fire, from a pipe he had put alight into his pocket. His appearance, on a white horse, with smoke arising from him, occasioned remark.

As far as Croydon, there was nothing much but houses and tram-lines; but beyond that the country suddenly began, and when one had passed through the lodge-gates of Addington Park, one might have been hundreds of miles from London. The road ran for a mile through woods and glades and ferny hollows, until the great white house could be seen from the top of a hill, with the open country stretching for miles behind it.

At the times where we were alone there together, we inhabited a delightful sunny room called the school-room, and had our abundant



meals in the steward's room. We were well looked after by an old servant and his wife, and enjoyed the most perfect freedom. There were the horses to ride, and we used to shoot rabbits, and towards the evening go up to a knoll of trees, with books, and wait there for the wood-pigeons to come over. We generally read, by agreement, over our meals, but there was no lack of talk, and after Hugh had been ordained and had begun his work in the East End, it was not always so frivolous as my reminiscences have hitherto shown us to have been. But Hugh never till the end lost his love of play, either mental or physical. It was part of his zest for the whole range of life, and kept him young.

At the times when the Archbishop was in residence at Addington, life was no less pleasant for a guest such as I was. Hugh's brothers were often there, and there were the two chaplains—young men, as the Archbishop liked them to be, and not too much taken up by their duties, in those quieter months, to be unable to enjoy the ordinary pleasures of a country house. Life went quietly and serenely, with plenty to do, outdoors and in. There was always much discussion going on, especially when the younger men, and others who might be staying in the house, met at night at 'Philippi.' This was the large attic smoking-room, which had to be away from the rooms occupied by the Archbishop. Sometimes the discussion waxed rather warm. Hugh and one of the chaplains once ended by falling out seriously. The next morning Hugh went away for a few days with the breach still unhealed. When he returned the chaplain met him, and said: 'When you had left, I thought things over, and came to the conclusion that you had been right. So I bought you a box of the most expensive cigarettes, to make up.' Then a smile began to spread over his face. 'But they were so good that I'm afraid I have smoked them all,' he said.

About the time that Hugh was ordained, I went to live at Kemsing, a retired village under the range of chalk hills to the north-east of Sevenoaks, along which runs the Pilgrims' Way, from Winchester to Canterbury. There was an interesting little fourteenth-century church there, and its Vicar was the Rev. Carleton Skarratt, who took a great pride in it, and had already done a great deal to beautify it. The Vicarage was a large house, which he had also much beautified, and in it he exercised a boundless hospitality, chiefly towards young men, of whom there was constant coming and going; for although Kemsing had kept that air of remoteness which is the great charm of an English village, it was only an hour's journey



from London, and it was possible for those who had work there to go up and down every day.

In February 1895 there was held at Kemsing a Retreat for the neighbouring clergy, and others who were invited to attend. The Vicarage was full of clerical guests, and Hugh was one of them. It was his first introduction to the place in which he afterwards spent eighteen months of his Anglican priesthood. He was at that time curate at the Eton Mission Church at Hackney Wick.

The Director of the Retreat was Father B. W. Maturin, then of the Cowley Mission. It began on one evening and lasted over the two following days. Besides various Offices, and a day strictly mapped out, it involved seven addresses in all, of an hour each. I was admitted to the Retreat as a layman, and upon Hugh's arrival, we found that we both had the same fear, lest, however willing the spirit, the flesh should be too weak to bear the strain. But there was no strain. Father Maturin, of all the preachers I have ever heard, was, at his best, the most capable of holding his hearers' attention; and he was at his very best then. He sat in a chair on the chancel steps, underneath the carved arcading of the rood loft, and talked; and I for one hardly took my eyes off him.

Hugh was just as deeply impressed. But he was not at all prepared to accept the advanced doctrine that was uncompromisingly put before us. We talked it all out during our afternoon walks in that deep winter weather, when the snow lay thick on the ground, and the sun shone in a cloudless sky above us. We ought to have kept silence, by the rule, but the flesh, with us, was quite too weak for that. Hugh was offended and somewhat distressed at the emphasis that had been laid upon auricular confession. He argued against it in his hot, dogmatic way, which yet was logical and persuasive, and it seemed quite unlikely then that he would ever budge from the *via media* in which his footsteps were so firmly planted. His views of the Church of England at that time even embraced the question of clerical costume. The proper dress for an English clergyman was a frock coat and a tall hat, with a white tie, and any sort of collar he might affect, as long as it didn't button behind. There were times also when he ought to wear his University cap and gown, but I have forgotten what they were.

There was no essential triviality in this. It was part of the need he felt for a defined and ordered way, a state of things in



which the Church of England should keep her authoritative course, as far removed from Romanism on the one side as from anti-Catholic Protestantism on the other. He looked back to a time when that way seemed to have been universally accepted, when there had been no controversies as to what the Church of England stood for, and her ministers had been free to do the work of their calling without living in a constant state of aggression or defence. I believe that if he had lived at the beginning of the nineteenth century instead of at the end he would never have left the Church of England. He was an extreme controversialist at all times, but it was necessary for him to feel that he had widely admitted authority behind him. That has been impossible in the Church of England since the Oxford Movement turned its level plain into a mountain, upon one slope or other of which its clergy must find a foothold, each for himself. There is no authority that is universally accepted in the Church of England, and with Hugh's temperament, when he had once set foot upon the slope that is on the Romeward side, he was bound to end where he did, little as he or his friends thought it. I remember his saying to me, a few years after he had 'gone over': 'It is such a relief to find my bishop as High Church as I am.' He had reached the level ground then, and could use all his artillery against those still on the slopes, without fear of being attacked from a position higher up or lower down.

Hugh took up his curacy at Kemsing in the spring of 1897. His father had died in the previous autumn, and his own health had rather suffered from the strenuous life he had led in the East End. Kemsing is a small parish, but a good deal went on there at that time in connection with the Church. There was no resident squire, and the Vicar was the chief man in the place; he was delicate in health, and unable to do all he wanted without help. Hugh would have time for reading, and his own health would benefit by the easy life.

He could have anchored himself for a time in no pleasanter surroundings. A study in the large well-furnished house was prepared for him, a new Morris paper put on the walls, and bookshelves and writing accessories arranged. The house stood just below the Pilgrims' Way, above the village. It looked south over a beautiful garden on to a lovely view of the hills on the other side of the valley, three or four miles away. The village was hidden by trees, but the church spire of Kentish shingle showed itself



beside a group of tall elms, and a path led down from the garden to the churchyard. The bachelor household was conducted on a scale higher than is customary in country parsonages, but its luxury was not such as to be enervating, and, as I have said, its hospitality was very freely offered, and to many to whom a period of rest in such a house was a great boon.

During the whole of Hugh's curacy at Kemsing I was living in rooms in the village; and for the greater part of it there lived at the Vicarage itself my brother and another friend of the Vicar's, an elderly Frenchman, very learned, very ecclesiastical—though anti-Roman, as we all professed ourselves—and very companionable in his odd, childlike fashion. There was also in the village a pretty, old-fashioned house occupied by the Vicar's brother-in-law and his family. And other relations and friends were always coming and going in both houses; so that we never lacked for society. All of us had work to do which heightens the charm of a country existence; and the church, and what went on in connection with it, was a great centre of interest. I remember with what intense pleasure I looked forward to Hugh's coming into the friendly circle; and his own pleasure in the prospect was keen, with so much to attract him.

I have never read the book in which he recounts the development of his convictions, which finally led him to Rome, and I do not know what changes he claims to have experienced during those eighteen months at Kemsing. My recollections are only of a gradual stiffening up towards what may be called the English section of the High Church party, to which he committed himself when he left Kemsing to join the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield. But the tone of our little society at Kemsing was always dominated by that idea of an English spirit, which had always marked our Church, no less after she had joined herself to Rome in the seventh century than when she had thrown off the papal yoke in the sixteenth. That was how we read her history. I remember Hugh's delight when he discovered a petition in the Litany as it was originally prepared: 'From the Bishop of Rome and all his detestable enormities Good Lord deliver us.' The tone was not always a wise one. Romanists and 'Protestants' alike came in for a good deal of rather foolish banter, which did us no good and them no harm, and there was always that academic looking towards the Greek Orthodox Church as the joint defender with the English Church of national Catholicism, against the



aggressions of what we amiably called the Italian Mission. We had a theory that Evangelical Protestantism was a broken reed against Rome, as compared with Anglican Catholicism, which is a theory largely held by High Anglicans. But I have never heard of any considerable number of direct converts to Romanism amongst Evangelical Churchmen or Nonconformists, nor of many members of the High Anglican party joining the Greek Church, when they have come to the conclusion that their own is so tainted with heresy as to have lost its claim to Catholicity. Of the men I have already mentioned, Father Maturin had already gone over to Rome, and Hugh and M. de Larpent were to follow him, besides another young clergyman of the neighbourhood who was often of our party, and as contemptuous of Roman claims as the rest of us.

I cannot remember at this distance of time when Hugh relinquished the views, with their indicative costume, that I referred to a little way back, but I think it was before he took up his curacy at Kemsing; for there they would certainly have been labelled as 'Protestant,' our chief epithet of disgrace. If, as I think was the case, he had shed all traces of his 'Protestantism' before he came to Kemsing, it was not until five years after he had left it that he became a Roman Catholic. We disputed about many things, sometimes with irritability, but stood on the same ground, which we thought as firm as a rock, with regard to Church doctrine and policy.

Hugh's preaching powers developed at Kemsing, though not to the extent that they must have done later, judging by the fame his preaching brought him. I can only judge by that, as I never heard him afterwards; but I can imagine the lines of his development.

In the pulpit all traces of his habitual stammer disappeared. He spoke very quickly, and sometimes passionately, but he certainly never ranted, as I overheard a critic accuse him of doing not long since. Everything that he said had been well prepared beforehand, and he did not depart from it, though he seemed to be preaching extemporarily. He spent most of his mornings writing out his sermons, and preparing his addresses and school lessons. I would go up sometimes and find him at his desk, which, however, he would occasionally leave to go into another room where there was a piano, or to read a few pages of a book in which he was interested, or for a few minutes' talk. I never remember him at any time so deeply absorbed in his work that he disliked being interrupted, or interrupting himself. He had the power of rapid concentration, or he could never have produced the amount that he did afterwards,



in the midst of all his other activities. When he had written his sermons, I think his system was to read them over several times to get them fixed in his head. But he did not learn them by heart, or prepare for any elaborate effects. Nor did he study oratory at all. What eloquence he had was natural to him, and was based upon interest in his subject, and his impetuous habit of mind and speech. As his mind became more stored, his need for self-expression greater, and his powers of speech more flexible, he might have been expected, from the signs he then showed, to become a great preacher.

During the time that he lived at Kemsing, the music of the church there was worked up to a pitch that I have never heard equalled in a village. My brother was an amateur organist of quite exceptional ability, and in the first year an organ was built to his specification which, under his hands, gave out just that mysterious rolling effect that thrills one in the music of cathedrals and great college chapels. And the boys of the choir, who were all from the village, were professionally trained to use their voices on those pure clean notes, which all boys with any voices at all possess, but will not use unless they are made to. In all these things Hugh took a great delight, as well as in the beautiful little church itself, the furnishing and decoration of which were raised to a high pitch, but without destroying its air of an ancient peaceful village church.

Hugh wrote no fiction at Kemsing. His first novel was not published until six or seven years later. But he wrote three fairy plays, which were performed by the village children with conspicuous success. He had done something of the sort at the Eton Mission, but at Kemsing we went in for that sort of thing so thoroughly that the makeshift arrangements which he loved to busy himself over were soon superseded by the most elaborate accessories and preparations. He had musicians to write bright music for his charming songs and choruses, and to play it on divers instruments; artists to paint scenery and design costumes, and ladies to make them; actors to help him train the children and stage-manage the whole; and so great was the success of these plays that he could present his company in a whole week of performances, with the village school-room crowded every night, and people coming from all round the country and even from London to see them.

Hugh loved children, and they loved him, and these fairy plays were a thrilling delight to the children of Kemsing. They were constantly being gathered together for rehearsals and individual



training, and as the time drew on for the great week, we had them with us almost all day and every day. It had a remarkably good effect in softening their speech and their manners, and in raising their intelligence. In this small village, after the first rather rough performance, there was never any difficulty in finding young actors and actresses of surprising ability for the chief parts, and the thirty or so who took part were all much more than competent. I have since seen several much advertised troupes of village players, but in the third play that Hugh wrote for the Kemsing children, they were far and away better than any of them. If he had stayed on there I am sure that the Kemsing village players would have become renowned throughout England.

With the break up of our circle at Kemsing, my continuous contact with Hugh ceased, though I think our friendship deepened, in spite of widely divergent ways of life and thought. I have spent very happy days with him since, and found him an even more delightful companion than he was during the years of which I have written. Our common sympathies, if more sober, were much wider than those of our youth, and a certain friction, that made itself felt before Hugh finally found what I believe to have been his true vocation in life, had completely vanished. He had a very dominating will, and had not always been easy to live with; but he seemed to me to have acquired of late years a self-reliance that was very different in its effects from the opinionativeness that had stood in its place before. He had the most lovable qualities, and they seemed to shine out in him more and more each time that we came together.

And now he is dead. I was to have seen him a few months ago. 'It is bliss,' he wrote from his house in the country; 'all meals under an old yew-tree now, with a hot garden on either side.' It would have been like going back to our youth; but it was never to be again.

ARCHIBALD MARSHALL.



### PIR KHAN.

ALL this happened only because two young Englishmen were bored, and because Yussuf Ali, the mule-man, was a coward and a liar.

Fort Amiran, lying squat and bare, exposed to the four winds of heaven, represented unredeemed ugliness. A strong, bare, low building of sun-baked earth, with never a tower or chimney to break the monotonous regularity of its outline. In its colouring of dull greyish yellow it matched well with its surroundings, for as far as the eye of the watcher from its flat roof could travel, stretched weary miles of a desert country, all of the same dull tint, broken only here and there by a rise of ground, a rise that could hardly be called a hill, so slight was it, and here and there by a few scrubby thorn and cactus-like bushes; for the rest sand, and yet more sand, until, far away to the north, the blue hills of Afghanistan beckoned the gazer with a hint of mystery and colour, and the promise of life, lying hidden beyond a plain over which it was sheer weariness to look.

It was from Fort Amiran that a startled Headquarter Staff once received an urgent wire, with a pathetic appeal for the immediate despatch of ten tons of green paint 'to touch up the landscape'—the first intimation given that another officer had broken down under the strain of loneliness and frontier work. Looking at Fort Amiran and its environment, one felt that there was considerable reason in the demand.

Inside the entrenchment surrounding the Fort were the huts of three hundred cavalry soldiers of the Indian Army, and here also were the go-downs of the camp followers—hewers of wood and drawers of water, necessary to the life of the garrison; and in the main body of the building lived the three English officers in charge of the detachment—Captain Holmes, who commanded it, and his two juniors, Lieutenants Donovan and Trevor.

For two months of unbroken monotony the three had been thrown, for better for worse, on their own resources, with no possibility of distraction from the outside world. It was not the dullness that tried them, it was the inaction, the want of work (for during the long, hot days even native soldiers could do little), and also the fact that they could not get away from each other—constant



companionship was forced upon them by circumstances. On the frontier, too, there is always a certain amount of strain, which tells upon those responsible for the safety of the post. Nothing happens for day after day, and yet at any moment of day or night something vital, meaning life or death, *may* happen, and the garrison must always be on the alert, always prepared. Taking one thing with another, the three young officers, good-tempered, healthy fellows though they were, were getting on each other's nerves. Of course men are not supposed to have nerves, but just the same kind of condition happens among sailors of dissimilar tastes and habits when boxed up in too close proximity—and Fort Amiran at this season was very like a ship, in that there was little chance of escape. They read, and re-read, the few books they had, smoked too much, and slept and talked through the interminably long hours of the hot-weather days, hours when the heat was so great that to live was a burden; and as they lay panting and enduring they wished, oh how they wished (especially Trevor, who was the youngest and most impatient) that 'something would happen.'

Very often they quarrelled; the hot weather, uncomfortable though it is, is not really unhealthy for the body, but there can be no doubt that it is very unhealthy for the temper—and any trifle was enough to start a hot discussion, degenerating often enough, at least on the part of Donovan and Trevor, into a childish squabble. On this particular day they had all three disputed fiercely over the absolutely unimportant matter of the date of the issue of the last new bit of equipment to the men. Holmes had overborne his juniors with the weight of his seniority, and later Trevor confided to Donovan that he 'couldn't stick' the way Holmes ate sugar with his porridge. Donovan agreed warmly, and they decided that it was a sign of effeminacy, if not of degeneracy—to their mutual comfort; but five minutes later they were in the thick of another argument (call it that) as to the pedigree of their dogs, all of distinctly plebeian origin. And so it went on. One has to make allowances for two months of an unhealthy, unnatural life, with no outlet for the energies of youth; for nights spent panting for breath, while they tried to sleep on a roof which, even at midnight, threw out enough heat to roast a potato (at least so Donovan declared) for the plague of sand-flies and other insect pests, and for a thermometer which never, day or night, dropped below 100. There was just one break, one day in the week to which they all looked forward for relief: Thursday, for that was



the day on which the mule-man arrived from the nearest post—bringing some portion of the men's rations, ice and other necessities, and, above all, letters and newspapers. He had always hitherto come punctually, up to time, but to-day an unexpected, an unbearable tragedy had happened; it was hours past his usual time, and there was as yet no sign of him.

Due at ten P.M., and now it was three-thirty. In abuse of 'that lazy swine Yussuf Ali,' Trevor and Donovan forgot their differences, but when another hour passed and still he had not come annoyance began to turn to consternation. They lay in long-chairs, scantily clad, in the bare little messroom (Captain Holmes having at last gone off for his afternoon sleep), muttering threats of vengeance on the defaulter, discussing the possibility of all sorts of happenings to account for the delay, and both unwilling to accept the older man's reasonable suggestion, that they'd get their letters all right in the evening if they'd only have patience.

It would have been well if they could have followed his example and slept away the rest of the afternoon, but Donovan's evil genius prompted him to propose that they should stroll along the road and meet the 'lazy devil,' and, hot though it still was, he and Trevor slipped quietly out of the Fort, and sauntered along the dusty track that served for a road—the road that led to Quetta and civilisation. There was indeed only one road from Fort Amiran, 'the road back.' It led to all that men valued—love, home, friends, comfort—and all seemed very far off, for the Fort was on the very fringe of the Empire—one of those outposts to which the Mother-Country sends a succession of the most enterprising of her sons.

Donovan and Trevor belonged to this order, and it was just one of Fate's nasty tricks that a combination of annoying circumstances made them ripe for any mischief that should come their way.

Yussuf Ali, the mule-man's, troubles had begun the day before in Quetta. He had been delayed from the beginning by various matters, the business of the garrison of the Fort; small commissions (with a due percentage to be subtracted, be it said) for the sowars, a new waistcoat of a gaudy pattern to be chosen for himself—for Yussuf Ali was a bit of a buck in his small way, and, all in connection with the waistcoat, a visit to be made to his mother's sister's daughter in the bazaar. A dangerous affair, that last.



It all took time, but it was an overcharge of two annas, made by the dirzee who was responsible for the waistcoat, that proved Yussuf Ali's undoing. The wrangle was long, the recriminations bitter; the sun was high before he started, and, after the pleasures of the bazaar, he found the road unusually weary and hot; so, as Captain Holmes had foreseen, he had lain up at noon, during the worst part of the day; but now, on the second day, all was well, he was nearing his journey's end, considering, as he jogged along, which of the many lies he had prepared to account for his delay would be the most likely to be believed (or the hardest to be proved false) by that astute and wary officer, 'Capitan Holmes Sahib.'

Merrily clanked the accoutrements of the three fine Government mules, as they clattered along, with Yussuf Ali seated on the hindmost, urging them on with heavy whip, and heavier abuse of their ancestry to the remotest ages. They were covering the ground well, and he was within five miles of the Fort, when Fate met him in the guise of a burly young Pathan, who sprang at the bridle of the leading mule, shouting roughly to him to halt.

Now, Yussuf Ali was a down-country man, and without courage. He truly described his state of mind when, in telling the story later to his fellows, he said, more graphically than elegantly, that 'his liver turned to water.' Only by that time Pir Khan, the unarmed Pathan, had swollen into ten times his number, had grown, in fact, into a gang of lusty marauders, armed to the teeth. What really happened was that Yussuf Ali put up no fight at all, but without hesitation rolled off his mule, and lay howling in the dust at his assailant's feet.

What had brought the Pathan Pir Khan, son of Suleiman Khan, to the spot at the psychological moment? Only the Fates who play with the destinies of men could tell us that.

Had he come out on a rifle-lifting errand, or had he known that a coward with mules would be within a dozen miles of his village, he would most certainly have been armed. And he was not; he had not, as it happened, even so much as the murderous knife, without which his kind rarely stirs.

How it all came about is of small consequence, the fact remained that it happened just so—Pir Khan saw the chance of his life, and being every bit of a man, he took it. It must be remembered in his favour that his moral code, such as he had, by no means forbade the stealing of mules—the property of his natural enemies



to boot ; so, having no weapon, he satisfied himself by kicking the howling Yussuf Ali just as a matter of form, so to speak, mounted the best of the mules, and set forth in all haste for his village across the border, the happiest man in Asia. Three mules, and undoubtedly boundless wealth in the bundles that were strapped upon them—so ran his reflections. Well might he rejoice. He was a made man for life ; the pick of the village beauties was his for the asking, riches and fat living for the rest of his days, and the thought of the envy of the other young bloods filled in his vision of the future. He thanked his gods, and sped cheerily on his road.

As the sounds of his going grew faint in the distance Yussuf Ali sat up ; then, all the while cursing bitterly and calling down unrepeatable maledictions on the head of Pir Khan, he got slowly to his feet, felt himself all over gingerly, found that bar a few bruises he was quite unhurt, and sat down again to consider the position. Here was a pretty to-do. His mules were gone, the property of the Sirkar, that Sirkar which has such an unreasonable opinion of the sanctity of its property, and here was he, Yussuf Ali, guardian of the mules, without a scratch to show in his defence. Verily here was prospect of much Hirkut (trouble).

The more Yussuf Ali thought of his position the less he liked it. He remembered that the 'Capitan Sahib' was a hard man to deceive, and an angry man often—and he, Yussuf Ali—knew himself for a coward, and trembled without shame.

Flight, the first idea of the timid, naturally occurred to him, but where could he go, where hide from the searching eye of the Sirkar ? Behind him lay Quetta, but a long way behind him, and there too the Sirkar was all-powerful. On either hand stretched the desert, and in front Fort Miran menaced him—and he with never a wound to back up the tale he must tell of the valiant fight he had made for his mules, and the property of the Sahibs. The 'Capitan Sahib' would of a surety demand wounds ; of that he was certain. For long he pondered—he was a coward, but he was between the devil and the deep sea. If the 'Capitan Sahib' would demand wounds, it were well then that wounds he should have. With many groans Yussuf Ali unsheathed his knife, and with shaking fingers he set himself to supply the evidence of his courage. Even slight cuts produce a deal of blood, and his terror was such that he feared to make his hurts too superficial, so that he soon presented a really gruesome appearance, and between his self-inflicted



injuries, loss of blood, and terror of Captain Holmes, he was a spectacle to move the pity of far more experienced men than Donovan and Trevor, who met him half an hour later, limping painfully along on his way to the Fort.

'To Allah be praise!' ejaculated Yussuf Ali ten minutes later, when, his tale told, with many an enlargement, the two young officers hurried away, leaving him to follow slowly.

'The poor devil's had a doing and no mistake,' said Donovan to Trevor. 'The cheek of those chaps! So near the Fort too—we ought to overtake them if we hurry up.'

'D'you suppose there were ten of them?' queried Trevor.

'More likely five at most;—these chaps lie like the devil,' said Donovan. 'Holmes'll be off for his ride by now,' he added. 'And it'll be dark by the time he gets back. What d'you say to going off on our own, Dicky? Should think we'd be a match for five of these Johnnies. Eh?'

Now, Trevor was a law-abiding youth, and he knew very well that Donovan's suggestion meant going into the forbidden country—in all probability across the border—and 'orders' were stringent that no one should ride outside a very prescribed area without an escort; but he was very young, and the prospect of the excitement, the chance of a 'scrap' with the thieves, appealed to him irresistibly. He had only been a short time in India, too, and his ideas of 'natives' were exceedingly and reassuringly vague. Donovan, on the contrary, knew better; but he was an excitable fellow, and his spirits rose at the prospect of a fight. On the whole he would have preferred to go alone—and take his chance; but he couldn't well get out of taking Trevor with him, and from the first he had been determined to go in pursuit. He was, in fact, very Irish.

He therefore continued to expatiate on the necessity of getting back the mules, and the men's rations, and their own ice and letters; and he soon worked up Trevor to a like amount of keenness. Trevor indeed put in a half-hearted suggestion that perhaps they'd better ask Holmes first; to which Donovan replied impatiently, 'Rot! If you wait for Holmes, we shall never see a flick of the tails of the mules again—and then there'll be the devil to pay, I can tell you. Holmes'll be jolly glad we went. We can't take any of the men either, in case we have to go into Afghanistan. If we have to go over the border when we are by ourselves, no one will ever know. See?'



And Trevor agreed, of course, as he generally did in the end to any suggestion of Donovan's ; and so the two stole into their quarters, looked to their revolvers, hustled their syces until their ponies were ready in an unusually short time, and then galloped off gaily on their mad errand, full of the joy of life again, after so many weeks of stagnation. 'Must be ready to act on one's own initiative now and then,' quoth Donovan grandly, and Dicky Trevor quite agreed, though his common-sense was giving him some trouble, and his heart was beating most unaccountably fast.

As for Donovan, he was perfectly happy as they hustled along over the coarse turf in the direction indicated by Yussuf Ali. The light was beginning to fail already—and darkness comes with such a rush in the East that there was every need for haste. Their ponies were very fresh, too, and pulled from the start. Side by side they galloped, over very rough going now, and at a speed that took Trevor's breath away, for he was nothing of a rider, and he soon became uncomfortably aware that his mount, a hard-mouthed country-bred, was taking charge. In vain he tried to pull in to a steadier pace. Donovan, who was ahead, either did not hear or would not listen to his appeals to slacken—and it was just as they both saw the figure of a Pathan with three mules, not far ahead of them, that Trevor finally lost control.

Donovan shouted over his shoulder, 'Only *one*, after all'—and gave chase with a whoop, as if he were out hunting—while Trevor's pony followed suit, but on a line far wide of the fugitive. In vain Trevor tugged at his reins ; the beast had a mouth like iron, and it followed therefore that when Donovan came up with Pir Khan he was alone—Trevor being still engaged in a futile struggle, far away on the right.

Pir Khan, hearing Donovan's shout, turned his head, and his golden dreams of a life of much ease and comfort vanished like a morning mist. It was a bitter blow ; he was so nearly in safety, and here was one of these mad Englishmen evidently in hot pursuit, and doubtless armed, while he, fool that he was, had been so elated by his easy victory over the mule-man that he had not even troubled to take his knife. Resistance was out of the question, of course, but he knew something of the ways of the English, and his brain began at once to scheme and plan for the future. He foresaw that he would be lodged in Quetta gaol eventually, but Quetta was a long way off, and doubtless there would be many ways of escape opened to him, if Allah so willed



it. Pir Khan therefore dismounted and waited for Donovan, quite prepared to surrender and give no trouble.

Unfortunately it is given to no man to read the mind of another, and Donovan was obsessed with his preconceived notion of Pir Khan. Instead of an unarmed, ignorant savage, who had recognised that the game was up, he saw one of a band of desperadoes, who had among them half-killed a Government servant, and who would most certainly kill him if he gave him the chance. In his eyes it was Pir Khan's life against Trevor's and his own, and the only thing to be done was to get at him quickly, before he could call up the rest of the gang—especially as that ass Trevor had put himself out of action by allowing his pony to run away with him. Through the tail of his eye he could see Trevor battling with his steed far away on the right.

It was the merest instinct of self-preservation, the instinct of the savage—living always with his life in his hand—that induced Pir Khan, when he dismounted, to put the bodies of the mules between himself and his assailant. He was making no attempt to defend himself—knowing that defence was impossible—and was prepared to make the most submissive of salaams, when he saw, to his astonishment and dismay, a revolver glistening in Donovan's hand. Pir Khan, in his surprise, shifted his position rapidly, and in so doing jerked violently at the mules' reins, throwing those troublesome animals into a state of confusion, which utterly demoralised Donovan's pony, and Donovan, though a good shot and a good rider, was forced to pay more attention to shooting Pir Khan than to his pony. There was a moment of indescribable confusion and movement—a harmless bullet whistling through the air—the squealing of the frightened, stampeding mules—a violent collision (Donovan felt as if he had been crossed at polo)—a kick on the knee from one of the mules, and then his pony falling and turning completely over, jerking his revolver from his grasp. He never quite knew how it all happened—it was so sudden and so unexpected—but the next moment he found himself lying helpless and unarmed at Pir Khan's feet, with the knowledge that there was something very wrong with his right arm. Pir Khan was bending over him . . . the cruel, stupid face so near his own . . . Into Donovan's mind flashed the memory of Livingstone in the power of the lion, and how Livingstone's only thought had been which part of him would the lion eat first. Donovan wondered where he was going to be hurt, and then he fainted . . .



When he came to himself he was surprised to find that he was not suffering. He remembered then that he had fainted, because Pir Khan had taken him by the arm. He opened his eyes very cautiously, filled with anxiety to watch his captor's movements, and saw Pir Khan, a few paces off, struggling into his (Donovan's) shirt. So that was why he had been so roughly handled! How lucky it was that he had fainted—for evidently the Pathan thought him dead; and Donovan, with his injured arm, which he found he could not move without the greatest agony, felt that his only hope was to do all in his power to foster that belief. Why his throat had not been cut he otherwise could not imagine. He felt extraordinarily stupid lying there, and quite unable to think connectedly, or to make any plan of escape. His one idea, his one hope, was to remain perfectly still—as long as no one touched him nothing seemed to matter. Fort Amiran, the theft of the mules, his ride with Trevor in pursuit—how far away and unimportant it all seemed! Only to lie quiet. The fact being that he was still dizzy with pain and with the effects of his fall.

Pir Khan, in the meantime, felt that things were looking up for him. To begin with, he rather fancied himself in the Sahib's shirt, which was a brightly striped affair which Donovan had been wearing-out at Fort Amiran, where clothes didn't matter. He put it on outside his trousers, in true native fashion, and looked a comical enough figure, had there been anyone in a state of mind to appreciate his appearance. And then he observed that the mules were not very far off, and Donovan's pony was standing quietly by—and the sahib was dead, or next door to it. It was a pity, Pir Khan reflected, that he had no knife. It had been just as well to make sure. It was then that the gleaming barrel of Donovan's revolver caught his eye. Pir Khan had handled a large variety of firearms, ranging from the old jezail to the latest thing in army rifles, but he had never had to do with a Webley's revolver, which, on raising the hammer, revolves the cylinder to a fresh cartridge.

The first thing he did was light-heartedly to blow down the barrel, an act that made Donovan hold his breath, thankful though he would have been to see him dead. Pir Khan's lucky star was certainly in the ascendant that day, for nothing happened, and, apparently encouraged to further experiments, he shifted the revolver in his grasp, with the obvious intention of shooting the helpless Donovan; but in his clumsy fingers, used to a trigger



which needed a good hard pull, this superior firearm went off prematurely, with startling suddenness, the bullet, fortunately for Donovan, flying heavenwards. In his surprise Pir Khan fired another unintentional shot, which so shook his nerves that, terrified by his want of control and feeling certain that the Sahib's gun was possessed by the devil, he flung it from him, fortunately to a safe distance.

Trevor meantime, when his pony had had his full of galloping, had managed to pull round, but he was some way off, and a slight unevenness in the plain, covered with scrubby undergrowth, hid Donovan and Pir Khan from him.

Through the bushes was evidently the nearest way, and Trevor, half wild with anxiety, dismounted and pushed his way to the top, arriving just after the final shot was fired. Instinctively he dropped behind a bush, though Pir Khan was not looking his way; he was, in fact, looking in the direction of the 'Shaitan ka banduk' (devil's gun), but that Trevor could not guess. What he saw was Donovan lying partially stripped and quite motionless, and a savage-looking individual, clad in portions of Donovan's clothing, complete master of the situation.

To say that Trevor was aghast is a mild description of his state of mind. The horror of seeing his friend, who had been only a few moments before full of life, lying before him dead, simply stunned him. He was incapable of taking any action; it did not seem to him that there was anything anyone could do. Donovan was dead—that finished everything; that was the end. Trevor was very young, fresh from a conventional life in safe, well-ordered England, where boys of nineteen fortunately are not often thrust into such a position, but he was no coward. If he had imagined for a moment that Donovan had a breath in him, he would have attacked Pir Khan without the least hesitation, and would probably have forced the adventure to a tragic conclusion. As it was, the sight of the lifeless body, combined with the sound of the shots, deprived him of all wish, and indeed of any inducement, to fight. What did it matter if Pir Khan did escape?—Killing him would not bring Donovan back to life. If Pir Khan had touched Donovan's body, the insult would no doubt have roused Trevor's dormant faculties; but Pir Khan's mind was occupied with quite other matters. Although he had not harmed the Englishman, it would go badly with him if the sound of those shots reached the Fort; besides, the mules were quietly cropping the short turf not far off—and



Donovan's mare was standing quietly by. Pir Khan decided it was high time to be moving.

Out of his half-closed eyes Donovan, from where he lay, saw Trevor's white face, with an expression of agonised dismay, watching, and recognised what his friend was suffering. He was beginning to think now that he might escape; his brain was working more clearly, enabling him to realise plainly the horrible danger through which he had passed; hitherto he had been more than half stupefied by pain, and that had really been his salvation. Maimed as he was, he knew that he was no match for a sinewy Pathan, even if that Pathan had no knife, and of that he did not feel sure. All the same Trevor's inaction puzzled, and in his normal state would have maddened, him—but as it was, perhaps it was as well. Still, when he saw Pir Khan creep towards his little mare and clamber clumsily on her, his anger rose. Was Trevor going to let the brute ride off scot-free? All the instincts of the dominant race rose in protest.

And Trevor watched dully, what did it all matter? Let the Pathan take Donovan's mare and the mules too, for the matter of that. Donovan would never ride again, and mischief enough had been done already. Why fire a shot which might set the country in a blaze and bring misery and death to many? Trevor's mind worked on, and, whether he liked it or not, pictured the carrying of Donovan's body back to Fort Amiran, saw the hasty grave dug, heard the wailing of the 'last post,' and remembered that it would be his duty to write the news to Donovan's mother.

Pir Khan hopped clumsily with one foot in the stirrup, the mare backing vigorously meanwhile. Once in the saddle, he listened. From the direction of the Fort came the sound of hurrying riders, and he knew it was time to hasten. One longing glance he cast in the direction of the mules, and then, urging the frightened pony with heels and voice, he set off once more on his way to safety.

Slowly and cautiously, a moment later, Donovan raised himself into a sitting position. 'Fire, you Juggins, fire!' he called softly to the astonished Trevor.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile, at Fort Amiran, the feeling of uneasiness, the sensation that there was something wrong, was spreading. There is nothing so infectious as anxiety, and Ressaldar Abdul Khan was very anxious. A Pathan himself, no one knew better than he the dangers of the borderland, or the uncertainty of life in that unsettled region. His own village lay within a few miles of the



Fort, and in Donovan's troop, of which he was *ressaldar*, were not a few of the best of his tribe. It was truly British, and all part of a system of generous trust in the soldiers they had trained, to put these men in a position of great responsibility, divided by only an imaginary boundary from their blood-brothers—their clan. But *Ressaldar Abdul Khan* had not eaten the salt of the *Sirkar* all these years for nothing, and his officers were quite safe when they reposed unbounded confidence in his fidelity, for the honour of his regiment came first with the *ressaldar*, and with that honour was bound up the safety and well-being of the English officers belonging to it. Indeed, *Abdul Khan*, now that they were in his own country, felt something of the responsibility of a host. In particular was this the case where *Donovan* was concerned. *Trevor* was newly joined, and *Holmes* had been transferred from another regiment a short while previously, and received the respect and consideration due to his position as *Commandant*. But with *Donovan* there was a different and deeper feeling—an affection born of hardships mutually endured, of marches under India's scorching suns, of bivouacs on Afghan hills in bitter cold, of reckless daring that had accomplished what seemed the impossible, and of courage that had been gay when hope was dead. *Donovan* had all the qualities which endear an officer to his men, and especially to a man of *Abdul Khan's* type.

The *ressaldar* therefore took far more interest in the *harum-scarum* young officer's proceedings than anyone ever guessed, and he had noticed *Donovan* and *Trevor* ride forth at an unusual hour and in an unusual direction; the wrong direction, in fact—towards *Afghanistan*. *Donovan's* air of suppressed excitement also had not escaped him; so had the *Sahib* looked when they had ridden, stirrup to stirrup, after the outlaw *Kamra Din* up the *Bolan*. *Ressaldar Abdul Khan* pondered on these things, and found additional ground for wonder when he heard *Holmes* question *Donovan's* boy as to his master's whereabouts, and heard that resourceful youth lie fluently and readily in his reply.

'So,' reflected the old soldier. 'The servant doth also think this is a strange and secret matter that the *Sahibs* ride towards *Afghanistan*—else wherefore should he lie?'

Moodily he watched *Captain Holmes* (thinking that all was well) ride leisurely away, and then *Yussuf Ali* limped in with his sorry tale—a tale every native in the Fort unhesitatingly decided to be false—and suspicion became certainty.



As time went on and Donovan and Trevor did not return, doubtless someone should have been sent to recall Captain Holmes—but native caution is dead against volunteering information. From the vantage-ground of the flat roof of the Fort, Abdul Khan watched and listened, and at a respectful distance some of the men of the troop watched and listened with him. It was still baking hot up there, but presently the hot wind dropped, and the sun's fierce rays began to slant, telling of the coming of darkness.

The watchers stirred and whispered uneasily, murmuring of the night which would soon be upon them, when nothing could be done, and ever straining their eyes to the north. Matters were growing very serious, and Rissaldar Abdul Khan began to wish that he had reported to the Capitan Sahib that the other Sahibs had gone towards Afghanistan and had never returned. Then suddenly came the sound of shots—revolver shots, in rapid succession. Very faint were the sounds; perhaps, had it not been just that particular sound for which they had all been listening, they might never have been heard; but as it was, it was a signal of distress, a call to action.

The rissaldar's anxious face relaxed. Action was so much more congenial to him than thought; and his orders were brief and to the point. In a few moments the Fort was a scene of wild excitement; but, as became picked troops on the frontier, there was no confusion, and in a very short time a patrol of a dozen men of the finest cavalry in the world, with Abdul Khan at their head, were riding to the rescue as if the devil were behind them.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was not long, however, before the rissaldar was forced to reduce his pace. Bare though the plain was, he knew well how small a rock or bush suffices for cover for a hill-man, and he had no mind to risk an ambush; so, throwing out a few scouts, he advanced warily with his main body. Slow though this procedure seemed, it was in reality hardly half an hour before one of his scouts rode back and pointed out the three mules, a little in advance, and in another moment a shout from Donovan told the rissaldar that his search had been successful. He rode hastily forward—the men, at a wave of his hand, pulling up—and dismounting with surprising agility (for he was a heavy man and no longer young) he bent over Donovan, exclaiming, his face softened by anxiety:

‘The Sahib is wounded! Which way went the dogs?’

It was characteristic of both men that Donovan and the rissaldar



acted as if the matter lay between themselves—Trevor was outside of it altogether.

'My arm's broken, Ressaldar Sahib,' said Donovan, 'and I've hurt my leg'; and he added shamefacedly, 'there's only one budmash—he went to the north—on my mare. Trevor Sahib's pony ran away with him,' he went on in an explanatory fashion—and then suddenly he blurted out, 'We've made a hash of it, Ressaldar Sahib.'

Thank goodness it was good old Abdul Khan who had come. Donovan felt their bad case couldn't have been in better hands.

'Praise be to Allah—the Sahib is not badly hurt; and behold the stolen mules,' said the rissaldar thoughtfully, pointing to a couple of men who were driving the mules towards them. Sahib sayeth there was only one budmash—but who can tell how many more lie in ambush? With the Sahib's leave I will place two men to guard the mules, and I, with the rest, will ride in pursuit. Is it well?'

'You won't catch the beggar,' said Donovan. 'He's got too long a start. But you may as well try.—Buck up, old chap,' he continued to the gloomy Trevor, as the rissaldar and his troop galloped off. 'Abdul Khan won't try to catch *one* Pathan—he won't like letting him get off with my pony—but he'll think that's better than spoiling our "izzat"' (prestige).

'I feel such an ass,' groaned Trevor. 'I've made such a mess of everything, and done nothing.'

'Ass be blowed,' retorted Donovan. 'We're both asses; and well out of it at that. What *I'm* wondering is, how they're going to get me back to the Fort, and what the mischief we're going to say to old Holmes?'

Donovan need not have worried himself over this last consideration. Rissaldar Abdul Khan and his men returned, as he had foretold, unsuccessful; and the return journey to the Fort, in spite of all the care possible, was of such a painful description that by the time the end was reached Donovan, for all his pluck, was quite beyond making any report to his superior officer. Indeed, had he been in a fit condition to do so, Abdul Khan had forestalled him, for he rode ahead in time to meet Holmes sallying forth with a strong rescue party, and when Donovan and his bearers came up the tale had apparently not suffered in the telling.

'How large was the gang?' did the Sahib ask? Who could say? Abdul Khan had seen the trampling of the feet of many



horses, and doubtless both Sahibs had shown great courage. So and so forth Ressaldar Abdul Khan, and when Holmes attempted to question him he launched forth into a dignified recital of his suspicions that the outrage was the work of a noted border-thief; and when Holmes again tried to keep him to the point of what really had happened, he sheltered himself behind the fact that he really had seen very little. At the same time he pointed triumphantly to the 'casus belli,' the three mules, standing patiently by; surely the Sahibs should receive great credit for the gallant fashion in which they had recovered the stolen property?

And then Donovan was carried up; and getting him to bed, and seeing that the little native apothecary in charge of the troops looked after him properly, took up all Holmes's attention.

'Sahib sota?' ('Does the Sahib sleep?') said Holmes, outside the door of Donovan's quarters next morning.

'Nahi, Sahib,' answered Donovan's 'boy,' in the rueful accents of one who has passed a troublesome night.

'Sorry to worry you, old fellow,' said Holmes, as he went in. 'How are you this morning? Had a bad night?'

Donovan lay in a tumbled, uncomfortable bed, looking feverish and distinctly cross. His tightly strapped-up arm had pained him considerably, and the theft of his favourite pony, a serious loss to a poor man, was weighing heavily on his mind. Taking one thing with another, he felt quite incapable of arguing with Holmes over yesterday's expedition.

'It's too bad to bother you,' went on Holmes, 'but I'll have to send in my report to-day, and old Abdul Khan is very strong about demanding Government compensation for the loss of your pony. I really think, according to him, we've got quite a good case.'

In spite of his discomfort, Donovan's sense of humour came to his aid, and he began to laugh—greatly to Holmes's astonishment. 'I wonder what the old chap's been telling you?' he got out at last. 'Haven't you seen Trevor yet?'

'No, I haven't,' said Holmes rather stiffly. 'Trevor's been on the range this morning.'

'Well,' said Donovan, 'I think I'd rather you did not apply for compensation this time, Holmes. I'll tell you all about it, if you'll swear never to give me away.'

The sleepy 'boy' outside wondered why the Sahibs laughed so much, and then decided that Donovan Sahib must be better, and that he might venture out of call to cook his rice; and



presently Holmes went away to tear up the half-written report, and incidentally to smooth down Abdul Khan.

It must have been a month later that three men of Donovan's troop—not noticeably good characters either—put in for furlough, their recommendations strongly backed up by Rissaldar Abdul Khan; and it was exactly a week after that that Donovan's servant awoke him one morning with the cheerful news: 'Sahib, kul rath Sahib ka tatoo, wapus argai.' ('Last night the pony came back.')

It was true. There, in her own stall, stood the little mare, looking as if she had never been away a day; but no one had seen her come, and no one knew anything about the manner of her coming—least of all Rissaldar Abdul Khan.

'Wonderful instance of the *homing instinct* in mares,' quoth Holmes to Donovan; and Donovan responded, with a cheery grin, as he passed his hand lovingly over the mare's sleek shoulder:

'Yes—and I hope you observe what remarkably clever syces the budmashes of these parts appear to be. She *might* have been groomed by our own men.'

A. M. SCOTT-MONCRIEFF.



## A PITEOUS STORY.

AERSCHOT, AUGUST 1914.

IN the 'grand place' of Aerschot (it is a small town of some six to seven thousand inhabitants) there stands, or rather stood, a confectioner's shop, where a young married couple were living at the beginning of August 1914. They had one child, a boy, of a year old, *petit* Jean by name, and there were three servants in the house besides. The shop had one of the best positions in the town, being between the chief hotel and the Librairie, and exactly opposite to the big pump, round which every evening many of the women of the place met to gossip and draw water; consequently it did a good business.

Aerschot had heard the sound of the guns before August 19. The Belgians had fought a rear-guard action outside, and had retreated through the town on their way to Malines and Louvain; but it was not till that fatal Tuesday that they had seen the Germans face to face, and it was with great anxiety that the people awaited the occupation. They were totally defenceless small provincials, and had in all probability not a weapon among them.

The Germans came in the morning; they appeared at first sight orderly and quiet, and the curiosity of the Flemish women brought them into the street to see the entrance.

Then the order came that the chief men of the place were to go to the Burgomaster's house to meet the German commandant, so Madame was left at home to keep shop with her servants in her husband's absence; a pretty young thing of twenty-five, of the *petite* Belgian type, a good housewife, spirited and vivacious. From twelve o'clock onwards the Germans came into the shop, and bought her bread and pastry, paying at first in German money, and afterwards in orders on the town. But as the afternoon went on their manners became freer; they took without paying, and she was glad when her husband returned. The deputation had been received with violent words, it appeared; the commandant said they ought to be all shot at once, but on further consideration he relented, and told them that as long as the town remained quiet, and no one fired on the soldiers, no harm should be done.

And so the day passed as usual, Monsieur doing his baking, and



Madame serving in the shop till seven o'clock, when the first shot was fired. Strangely enough this first single shot seemed by the sound to have been fired just outside the very house in which they were, and to have been directed against it. The servant, who was at once sent upstairs to fetch *petit Jean*, came running down in a panic, saying, 'Quick, quick, to the cellar, or we shall all be killed !' She had seen the soldiers assembling outside, and the event showed that she had indeed good reason for the worst of her fears, for a few minutes after the first shot a general outburst of firing followed. Madame hastily seized the till drawer, and placed it in a dark corner under a heavy chair, covering it with a table-cloth. 'Without the money we shall be lost ; they will not see it there.' As she did so, three bullets came through the window with a great crash of glass, and entered the wall close to her head. Then she seized the child, and fled to the cellar. Her husband hastily put a few provisions into a bag and followed her, the two servants clinging to him. The cellar was very small, and had but one little aperture for ventilation ; but there they remained in comparative safety while the roar of bursting shells was added to the rifle fire. A large bath was stored in the cellar, and at each explosion the metal boomed in sympathy and woke *petit Jean*, who had to be comforted anew. 'Kiss me, Papa ; kiss me, Maman ; kiss me, Mina ; kiss me, Tata.'

After about a quarter of an hour of this din (it seemed to the trembling little party many hours) a bugle rang out, and the firing ceased. Then they heard soldiers running in the streets outside ; presently in the house above their heads, in the shop, and on the stairs. 'The house will be set on fire,' said Madame to her husband ; 'look out and see what they are doing.' Monsieur did so ; the soldiers saw him and came rushing down to the cellar door. On this they rapped loudly three times, and shouted—'You must leave at once. Take what you like, but go.' With that the door was broken down, and the unfortunate family driven out with violence, the wife carrying *petit Jean*, and the husband his bundle, which contained bread, chocolate, a small ham, and some business papers.

As they passed through the shop Madame managed to secure some of the money, for the soldiers had not noticed the till, and it still lay where she had left it. But they kicked Monsieur's bundle out of his hands, so that the papers flew all over the floor, and noisily demanded food. 'There's a large batch of bread in the



oven,' he said; 'I should think it would be ready by now.' They fetched it and smelt it greedily. 'Aha! this is right; you bake good bread.' So it came about that when the couple left the house they had nothing left but a little bag with a few things for the child, and Monsieur had the baby-shoes and stockings in his pocket. It was then half-past seven. The soldiers, horse and foot, were rounding up the inhabitants in the streets, and driving them all into the market-place.

One of them hit Madame with a heavy whip as he passed. Fortunately she had on a heavy fur mantle, but the blow knocked her down. As Monsieur leaned to pick his wife up, another soldier bayoneted him in the face and neck. The blood fell on *petit* Jean, and the child, when he saw his sleeves redden, cried out, 'Papa, papa, Blood.'

Another soldier, when he heard the cry, said to the assailant, 'You ought not to have done that,' and tried to help Monsieur to tie up his wound as well as he could. But there was no time to do much for him, as the men were bound and driven away from the women at once. All Monsieur could do was to whisper to his wife: 'Fly to Ghent, quick, with the child; don't mind me.' She never saw him again, nor heard whether he was one of those shot by the Germans outside the town or no. But in the confusion and fright of the separation, she dropped the child's frock, which she had in her hands. As she bent to pick it up, a soldier said: 'Don't do that, or I shoot.' And so *petit* Jean remained all night long in nothing but the little night-gown he had been wearing when they took him out of bed.

The women were then placed in a body round the pump, guarded by a cordon of horse and foot soldiers. While there, Madame saw all the movable contents of her house hurled out of the windows. Bedding, tables, chairs; all the little wedding presents of which she had been so proud a few years ago; her husband's clothes, her own dresses, everything. One of the mattresses was used to cover the mud, made by the pump's overflow. Among them at first was a M.P., a printer and his son, a boy of sixteen. They were in a pitiable state of terror, and tried to hide themselves behind the women, but an officer saw them and called them out. They were shot at once. Again and again inquiries were made among the women for the wife of the Burgomaster, whom the Germans seemed very anxious to find. But though she was there, sitting beside Madame all the time, no one offered to betray her, and fortunately



none of the soldiers knew her face. The story of how her husband and son were shot, as the result of a lying accusation, is well known. That terrible tragedy she herself witnessed, and then escaped from the town. The Germans never succeeded in finding her, though they put a large sum of money upon her head. About eight o'clock the burning began, house after house being deliberately set on fire by soldiers. The women grew more and more frightened, and thought that they were to be burned alive. But Madame said, 'No, that could not be, for it was plain that if anybody was burned, the soldier guard would suffer first,' and through the thick smoke which filled the market-place, they could still see the grim figures of their guards upon their horses. But the heat and choking vapour made the women faint and thirsty, and a soldier in pity brought Madame two bottles of wine out of the cellar, to revive them. He had just succeeded in uncorking one of them, when an officer saw him, and rushing up in a fury, broke them violently upon the soldier's head. And so the dreadful night wore on, till about three o'clock in the morning, when the Germans suddenly changed their minds, and drove the women all away with cries of 'Schwein, cochon'—to go where they would. Some tried to pass by the flaming streets, and were nearly burnt alive, but Madame managed to make her way through a little shop into a side alley. Down this she hurried with her two servants, *petit* Jean, and an old gentleman, who found himself in their company. In many places her way led her between flaming houses, but she ran desperately on to escape from Aerschot at all costs. About six or seven miles from the town (three 'hours' by the Belgian method of measurement) lies a little hamlet called Montaignu, where her husband had a friend, and thither she ran with her servants. Here she rested for an hour or two, and got a little food. She also left her bag there, but could not be persuaded to stay herself. She must find her husband at all costs, and she dared not leave *petit* Jean behind. So back to Aerschot the three women hurried in the morning, walking abreast, but far apart, so that if a shot should chance to kill one of them the others would be still alive to save him.

At twelve o'clock they again reached the smoking town.

An officer noticed them. 'What do you want here?'

Madame spoke up with spirit: 'I'm come to find my husband.'

'Who is your husband?'

She named him.

'Probably he has been shot for firing on the troops.'



Madame is undaunted. 'He had no gun : he could not fire on them, but I know he was wounded.'

The officer was touched by her courage, and sent a soldier with her to inquire at the hospitals. From one place to another they trudged, carrying *petit Jean*, but nowhere could she hear any news of him. At last, hungry and in despair, she sat down on the doorstep of a ruined house, and fainted. Another officer saw her and came to the rescue. He had her carried up into the garret of a large house close by (there was no one in it but an old man who lived on the ground floor), and told the servants to lay her on the bed. By this time it was evening, and after a short absence the officer returned with meat, potatoes, wine, and other things, and finding Madame sitting up, said : 'I have brought you something to eat. Get supper ready for us. I'm coming to sup with you.' She set to work to prepare a meal, with the help of the two servants, but there were no knives. So the officer went away again, and presently returned with a handful of knives in his hand. These he threw roughly on the table, so roughly that *petit Jean*, who was sitting up playing, got his finger cut. It was plainly an accident, but it caused some little delay in getting the supper ready. Presently all was prepared, and they sat down to supper together. The officer told the women to taste the wine before he drank any for fear it should be poisoned. They had hardly finished their meal, when a soldier (probably also an officer) came into the room, and said, 'Whom have you here ?' The officer said, 'A sick lady and two servants,' and the man retired without a word. But he was hardly gone before the officer said : 'Quick, quick, into your room, lock the door, and stay quiet.' He hurried them up into the garret, and saw that the door was locked before he left. There was only one bed there, which the nurse hastily took for herself and the child, so that the other two had to lie on the floor. But the noises without prevented their sleeping, and at ten o'clock Madame cautiously looked out and saw in the garden below a little shed, where a number of women and girls were in the hands of the soldiers. What she saw inspired her with such horror that she determined to act on her husband's last words, and fly with the child without further delay to Ghent.

Next morning the officer returned, and suggested that he should take them to a hospital to help nurse the wounded, but she said, No, she must first return to Montaigu to fetch her bag.

He said : 'No, you can't go now.'

'But I must; I have no clothes for the child.'



'That's easily settled,' he said, and presently returned with a strange collection of clothes in his arms, and an india-rubber 'soother' such as is used for little babies.

She managed to dress the child in a little jersey and pair of knickerbockers. It was hard, she thought in her mother's heart, that his first suit should be one stolen by the Germans. But she was not to be turned from her purpose; she must and would return to Montaignu for the bag.

But he said: 'No, you cannot.'

She insisted.

'Very well then, I'll go and try to get leave.'

While he was gone they fled, and again made their way along the dangerous roads to their friend's house.

It was plain that the Germans had already been there before them. As they passed the large chocolate works in the village, they saw that the great door was broken down, and that all the lamps in the road were shattered. Terror seized them again, as they hurried to the shelter of the friendly roof. And when she heard the noise of the Germans coming singing down the village street, Madame took her bag and said: 'No, I can't bear it; I'm going, we can't stop here.' That night they slept in a wood, and saw Montaignu in flames behind them. They had neither food nor clothes; just the one little bag with a few things for the child. Three little pieces of bread and butter was all that the three women had to eat for two days.

When they resumed their journey along the high road next day, they kept meeting soldiers, who frightened them with rough words; and then it was that her quick woman's wit invented a device to aid their helplessness. When passers by were troublesome she told *petit* Jean in Flemish to kiss his hand to them. This he did with all baby seriousness, and it often had the desired effect. Many of the rough soldiers took him up in their arms and kissed him.

One party in particular in an automobile stopped them. 'Who are you? Where do you come from? Where are you going to? This is not the way; you're flying. Back to Germany, that's the only road you can go now.'

*Petit* Jean was being carried in a blue apron on the nurse's back. 'Quick, quick, put him down,' said Madame, 'perhaps they'll have pity.' But the soldiers were suspicious.

'What have you got in that bag?' one cried. 'Hands up, or we shoot; the child too,' and the piteous little group remained



with hands in the air, *petit* Jean standing with bare feet on the stones, his little fists raised in like manner.

'Open the bag, and show us what you've got, or I shoot,' said another. They were teasing her, for as soon as she bent down to open it the first one cried, 'No, hands up,' and threatened her anew with his revolver. But they, too, were touched by the sight of the baby boy, and after a little delay they went on their way and let the fugitives pass.

So by way of Testelt they wandered towards Ramsel.

That night they slept in a hut, and in the morning an old woman gave them a crust of mouldy bread to eat. They found an egg in a deserted barn which they gave to *petit* Jean. It was here that they heard a man say 'I'm going by train to Antwerp.' Madame ran after him, seized him by the cuff, and said: 'Where, where can we get a train?'

'At Heyst op den Berg, but you'll have to walk five hours first.'

And they did it. Fifty-two hours in all they had been afoot when they reached the station.

Fortunately Madame still had a little money left, and that evening, at a quarter past eight, they reached Antwerp in safety. The next day they took the train for Ghent, and arrived there in a sad state of dirt and desolation on the morning of Sunday, August 24. The mother at Ghent scarcely knew her daughter and grandson. Madame was hatless, her hair streaming down her back, her face so pinched with misery that 'it wasn't bigger than the palm of my hand,' said her mother (to whom this tale is due), and *petit* Jean's clothes were all filthy with dirt and blood. But the daughter was not willing to stay with her mother at Ghent. She was going to leave *petit* Jean there, and then return to Aerschot to look for her husband.

But the next day she was so ill that even to her undaunted resolution it became plain that further travelling was impossible. For three weeks she remained at home recovering from the effects of that dreadful pilgrimage, and then went to take refuge with her husband's parents in Holland.

The sad story of these helpless victims of the German invasion is told. Twice since that time has she ventured back to Aerschot to inquire if there be any news of her husband. Once in the first days of her stay in Holland, and again in later times, because she had heard that other people were to be put into all houses if the



proper owners did not return to the town. On the first occasion, she heard that someone had seen her husband heavily bandaged, looking at his house ; on the second, a woman told her that she had undoubtedly seen him shot. Unless he be all this time a wounded prisoner in Germany, unable to communicate with his friends, there can be no doubt that he shared the unhappy fate of so many of his townspeople. As for what had been her home, Madame found it wrecked beyond all description. Everything had been broken, which had not been stolen. The chests of drawers had every drawer separately chopped up with a hatchet, and the frame had been turned up to serve as a table ; the piano, which had been also heavily cut about with an axe, was on the second occasion clean gone—stolen—and every rag of linen in the house, including the little baby clothes carefully locked up in a separate box, was torn to pieces or taken away. The water-butt in the yard had apparently been used for some orgy of drunkenness, for it was red with the lees of wine, and thrown down.

The perambulator of *petit* Jean, overlooked in a dark corner, was the only remains of what had been their home before the terrible inundation of barbarity and cruelty swept over Belgium and left everything that had been theirs, alas ! utterly ruined and desolate.

E. D. RENDALL.



## 'MOBERLY'S'—AND RUGBY IN THE LATE 'SIXTIES.

BY O. R.

LOOKING down on the rows of gaudy covers that clamoured at me from the bookstall my eye lighted on the cheerful orange of *Cornhill*, and picking it up I hurried to my train, and began a tiresome journey. We had to travel two hundred miles and more, and yet here we were gliding into St. Pancras and had scarcely started. Well might I rub my eyes ! but such is the magic power of the printed page—

'With easy force it opens all the cells  
Where memory slept. . . .'

I had dipped at hazard and come upon Mr. Wise's recollections of Rugby in the early 'seventies, and of Moberly, whose name, he tells us, is still toasted where old Rugbeians meet, even in the far-off corners of the spinning globe, in memory of the famous school song that he wrote. Mingling with the hum of wheels as we rushed through space once more I heard the chords and harmonies, a piano touched with skilful fingers, and a light tenor that many years of training youth had perhaps hurt a little, humming—  
*tum tum—tum tum—tum tum ti—*

'Evoe laeta requies  
Advenit laborum  
Fessa vult inducias  
Dura gens librorum . . .'

And then '*Floreat—floreat—FLOREAT Rugbeia.*' The old words came back in a moment, and I began to sing them too, and cannot wonder that the good people in the carriage took me for some mad minstrel escaped from Bedlam. Abashed, I sang no more, but closed my eyes, and dreamed of Moberly, the old old days, of Rugby in the late 'sixties ; and floating over the yawning chasm of more than forty years came many a scene, and many a face ; some but poor faint images sadly blurred by Time, others that rose up from the deeps quite sharp and fresh.

For was I not in 'Moberly's !'—here he comes, ebullient, swinging along, tall, broad, just a little ungainly, scholar, dreamer, with something childlike in him, eyes spectacled and blue, deep-set



and small, talking to himself, humming snatches of glee and madrigal, with grizzled curly hair, and whiskers—yes I *think* there were whiskers which were then in fashion, and gave the face a pleasant shade like leafy bushes about a house, smoothing sharp outlines, the cold carved flesh we see to-day. Well, never mind—here he is—in clerical garb, loose and comfortable such as the poet or man of letters loves, and with a genial laugh and ready smile, bends down to three small shivering boys who have just been delivered in his study like carrier's parcels one day in shrewd and nipping January—the pictures come and go, so let me catch them on the wing.

So this is *our* study! 'Tis but a few feet square but gives us a pleasant sense of comfort—couch and chairs, shelves and cupboards, a tiny table, books and pictures, all our small possessions—it is a little castle. But listen! without are sounds that fill us with apprehension—the roll of wheels, the crash of boxes, the thud of leather, many voices, shouts of laughter, footsteps racing along the passages, bangings of doors—a whole uneasy world with all its fickle moods and humours—the Rugbeians have come back again to School.

The loud dinging of a bell down below in the courtyard—'Ding—Ding—Dong—Ding Ding—Dong Dong—Ding ding ding.' How peremptory!

We wait till all is quiet, and then creep down and, peering through an open door, see our Hall, bare boards, bare walls, tables laden with great beakers full of small ale, baskets of bread and cheese, and din enough to wake the seven sleepers. We shrink away and wait beneath the glittering stars, when suddenly the shadowy form of Moberly, our only friend, stalks by, and catching sight of us he pushes us in before him. Greetings, Call Over,—a dark and tubby man—old Willum I hear them call him—sweeps up the crumbs, brings in a reading desk—and evening prayers. So good-night—and we three new ones steal silently upstairs to a long and narrow room in which are ten small white beds, and at the foot of each a small black box studded with neat brass nails something like a coffin's, in which we keep our wardrobes; and facing each again as many tiny washing-stands—and we make haste to hide ourselves before the rest come tumbling in, all too excited to give more than a butt or two at the bulging clothes. Then stalks in Top Sawyer, head of the House—the man-boy of the 'Sixth,' lights out—a giggle, a stifled shriek, a sudden cry of pain—and silence—and the frosty moon that turns Long Room to silver.



So oblivion—for a moment it seems—but there are footsteps echoing in the passage, the door opens, a flash of light—it is old Willum come to call us, and a cold, dark, winter's morning—'Mr. Smith'—'Mr. Jones'—'Mr. Robinson'—'Mr. Brown'—'Mr. Thompson'—and so to the end—and demands an answer too,—'All right, Willum'—'Yes'—'Yes'—'M—yes'—'m—m'—'oh!'—'ALL RIGHT'—in piping treble, angelic alto, breaking note of higher teens—all a little muffled by the covering bedclothes.

The Hall, a roaring fire, two great kettles hissing out jets of steam, great baskets of hot rolls, pats of butter by the dozen, rows of tea and coffee pots, no two alike—rows of canisters—each seizes his own, and having brewed his liquor hurries to his place at the tables along the walls. But there is no time to linger, and soon we all troop down the road to Big School and morning prayers, 'Call Over' and 'First Lesson.'

Big School is a sight to see: a vast and sombre chamber, that stretches into space, soaring high above us where brood the winter mists, and lit by cressets of flickering gas; boys of every size and shape are pouring in; a narrow way runs through their midst, a sort of buffer State across whose borders it is forbidden to go, in which some Methuselah of eighteen or so does sentry-go with willow cane in hand to keep back the pressing throng. It is no easy task; unless he be big of frame, or famous for more than letters, he himself may be the butt—such are Power and Place! But so he learns to face the warring world. What a buzzing! What a hum! Such queer noises! How busy are some of the bees in the great hive already!—with eyes bent on open books, giving 'construes' to one another of cryptic posers in the classic authors of Rome and Greece, hunting for errant verbs gone wandering down the page, striving to reconcile the yearning noun to some coy adjectival mate, seeking some elfish link that's gone a-missing.

But those, alas! are few in number. Woe be now to him whose ears are of extra size, whose nose is just a bit too short or long or turns up skyward, or has a fiery head, or wears some garment that is not quite cut according to the Cocker of the times. Not then did collars deep and wide enclose the neck, enduing boys with an engaging air of adventitious innocence; no uniformity of clothes, though they must be of fuscous hues: black the colour of the tie, and straws of white or speckled the general headgear, bound round with ribbons of many colours, according to the sumptuary laws that distinguish House from House, and rank from rank. We



new ones are easy to spy out—not for us the straw, but towering tile—the tall silk hat then known as a ‘boxer’ that in such a jostling multitude is quickly ruffled—see!—one has let his drop and there it goes, shot across the buffer State by many a hidden foot, until it is lost beyond recovery. Life is not a good joke for us just now. There is so much to learn that is not writ in books—and all standing, mind! no seat or desk to guard you.

Still they come pouring in, and louder rises the general roar, when the Clock without begins to strike the warning quarters, and lo! looming through the mists comes the Doctor—‘Temple’—‘Temple’—‘Temple’—I hear them say—the stern and rugged Temple, black and hairy, of middle height, broad of girth, full jawed, with overhanging brow scarred by signs of many an inward battle, an all-controlling eye—who, tasseled cap in hand, gathers up his gown, and mounts up to his throne. Many masters just below, the doors are shut—Silence—as when the judge comes into court—Prayers—in stern and rugged tones—how sorely needed by the hosts of upturned faces!—each an unknown world within it—a sight to test even the courage and devotion of a Temple.

But take notice of that tallish figure by the doors who stands beneath him—in a plain coarse gown of office, the pale man with a nose that dominates his face as some huge monolith the surrounding landscape. Regard him well, ye tiled ones, for he is more to be dreaded than even Doctors—grim embodiment of Law and Order. ’Tis the Rhadamanthine Patey, the School Marshal *consule Templo*, feared, respected even by the most reckless—sung for his hound-like scent, his never-failing eye, his innate grasp of the rules of Evidence—the all-pervading Patey, silent as the grave, impeccable. Never is he known to miss his mark at School, or Prayers, or Chapel—Ulysses himself with all his cunning could not have got the better of him. So Patey I sing, and honour to his memory, though he cost me several *Æneids* in my time—let Justice be although the Heavens fall—no wonder my prose gets rather rhythmical when I think of him, just a little dithyrambic. ‘Here, Sir,’—‘Here, Sir’—Call Over—Patey at his tablets.

Big School is empty; each hurries to his burrow in the scholastic warren, some through open doors in the echoing cloisters—some this way and that—I and two other tiled ones to a turret room just by the Chapel end, up and up and into ‘Lower Middle Two’—a narrow chamber, gas lit, fire, a line of desks along the walls, and facing them an alcove and a throne in which sits our Master in his gown—



tallish, loose-knit, quite young no doubt, but oh ! so old, so big to us. How grateful we new ones are to him, hiding in the dimmest corner by the door ! He has been through Rugbeia's mill himself and knows well our feelings, and all he says in sympathetic tones is : ' What's your name ? '—' and yours ? '—and lets us be—that's Lee Warner as I remember him. His the quiet way, gentle shafts of irony, dry strokes of sarcastic humour, answering the fool according to his folly, sometimes indulging in a sally, perhaps a little scornful, but smiling now and then to show his pleasure when he strikes a spark of sacred fire from the flint.

So we new ones hang upon the desk, scarred by many a blade and smeared with ink, and watch, and muse and listen ; *viva voce*—' Specimina ' from the Latin poets—Ovid I think this winter morn—something about the changing colours of the dying dolphin ; then the scratching of pens upon the foolscap, the shifting of uneasy feet, coughs and sneezes, the hollow murmurs of soliloquies, some even soothe their pangs by gnawing at the feathery quill—thrice blessed Quill !—best friend of battling boyhood, though plucked from goose's wing, whose spluttering nib leaves teasing diphthong in deceptive ambiguity, and gains the benefit of the doubt for uncertain terminations—gone out of fashion no doubt in these too knowing days. Thank the gods !—the last quarter strikes—the hour—and first lesson is over.

How queer it all is ! There is such freedom, such liberty. We seem to come and go much as we please, our only rulers the round face of the Clock in the old gray Quad, and Patey—even the Doctor bends his shoulders to the yoke. Yet no community is under rule more drastic, though the laws are all unwritten. Oh ! what a lot there is to learn—we pay much heed to Tradition, as becomes those who breathe the air of old Rome and Athens ; we must be humble as our betters have been and take the lowest places ; be modest in address, bear oppression with a cheerful face and yet hold up our heads—know all the words and phrases that are current coin—and thus with many an ache and pain be run into the mould.

So we go—in and out of the scholastic warren, into this dark burrow and that with books and pads and quills ; or in the hours of relaxation wander arm in arm about the busy town as if we owned it ; all eyes, all ears, but treading warily, meeting many a rebuff to which our tiles expose us so, but somehow, by hook and crook, picking up the ways of the new world. Who is that grave and reverend senior who walks with head bent down in thought ? It



is the Head of the School—with rows of stars and daggers against his name in the lists, that signify great honours—yet none seem to heed him much. Who's that?—everyone turns round to look—a hero? Yes—the Captain of the Eleven. Such a swell—the swell of swells!—tall and fair and broad, and tanned by sun and wind, with a light blue ribbon running round his straw of white—give him the wall! get off into the road amongst the wheels and horses!

Caps and gowns flit by—the mild Jex-Blake who takes the 'Twenty'; the lithe and sinewy Wilson—smiling—once a senior wrangler says one—who conjures for us with sine and secant and plays all sorts of pretty tricks with angles; the calm, impassive Sidgwick, the stalwart Robertson, long Papillon with the kindly eyes and gleaming glasses, the beaming Whitelaw who seems so guileless,—'Bobby' they call him—Philpotts, 'Dicky' Burrows, 'Jimmy' Buckle—they rise up from the deeps like shades—some, alas! must now indeed be in the Lower World—the Park Lane side of those dim regions I am sure, the pleasant fields of Elysium, where (dreadful thought!) perhaps they hear with lurking smile the useless wails of those who would not heed their admonitions.

What temptations lie in wait for us! Our path is strewn with them—the test of character is part of the *régime*. Not the sea-worn mariners of Odysseus ever felt a greater longing for the joys of Circe's marble Palace than did we for the good things of life. Few can resist the lures of the portly Jacomb, or of Hobley lower down the street. The sausage enclosed in flaky crust that melts upon the palate!—the too shallow glass of cream that floats upon the luscious jam!—the brandied cherries eked out with crumbling cake—I sigh to think of them. Eheu! eheu!

Then we may have business to transact—a call upon our tailor, our hatter, or perhaps it is old Jim Gilbert, who makes the boots and is famous for his footballs; or else we stroll about the great green Close that stretches fair and smooth over many an acre of broad land, fringed with trees, and studded with mighty elms round which the rooks are ever wheeling. Goal posts rise up here and there between which on half-holidays the mighty contests rage—this much-worn hollow is 'Puntabout'—they are at practice now and the balls are hurtling at random through the air. The gray line of buildings that have a castellated presence is the School House, and that turret door will lead you to Doctor Temple's study if he beckons—for good or ill as the case may be—beware and don't cut Sunday Chapels, or Patey is sure to mark your absence—



and inevitable as Death himself will sound his rat-tat on your door. More masters striding past—Hutchinson, 'Old Beaks' his name for short, Arnold—'Plug,' the sturdy Bowden-Smith—they have Houses, too, whose roofs peep through the trees—one is 'Cock,' if my memory does not play me false—for every 'House' is for itself, each a castle like a feudal baron's, each with its badge and banner—mortal foes, yet uniting for the common weal.

'Cuckoo'—'Cuckoo'—the leafless groves are filled with the soft and soothing notes. 'Cuckoo'—'Cuckoo'—What! the harbinger of Spring in dreary winter time?—ah! 'tis Autolycus, who haunts the roads in search of pence, and is said to be a troglodyte and live amongst the coverts and spinneys of Shakespeare's lovely Warwickshire. His bird-like eye has seen our tell-tale tiles, and hence his war-cry—'Cuckoo—cuckoo—cuck—oo'—and from out his tattered covering brings a fledgling as callow as ourselves, a brood of mice, some speckled eggs blown long ago—to tempt our changing fancies.

All is new and strange, indeed. That very night a few of us had just built up some Latin verses as Balbus did the wall, each copy differing a little for prudence' sake, and were basely using the Gradus that had helped us to Parnassus as a football for a friendly scrummage, when one bursts in upon us crying like a bellman—'*Singing in the Hall, you fellows*'—and, leaving our snug fireside, down we have to troop in obedience to the call. The Hall is full, the House assembled, lolling in free and easy fashion, and in the highest spirits, sipping the supper ale and eating bread and cheese or using them as missiles. Upon a table stand two chairs, one tottering on the other; on either side a goodly youth with each a fives bat in his hands—not to beat time with as you might suppose but to spur the quavering songster on. It is no easy task even to ascend the giddy height to which we new ones mount in turn, and then, when nicely poised, with fluttering heart and burning throat try to warble out a song.

In vain is protestation; if memory fails, an application of the hard-faced bat soon spans it on, or a gentle titillation of the chairs. One begins too low and tries the higher key, to produce top notes that are greeted with discordant cries. Even the most affecting ballad does not move them, though it would bring tears to the eyes of any normal crocodile—'Barbara Allen' is my offering, and for days I never hear the last of her—'Cheer up, Barbara!'—'Cruel Barbara!'—what unholy screeches, wild howls in wailing



minors, even cat-calls greet her when she tells the young man she thinks that he is dying—down go the chairs and he dies upon the floor without shriving. We new ones are a doleful lot, but the old ones make amends when called on by the Chairman for a song. The chorus is the point—nothing else matters very much: 'The Captain with his whiskers'—'The mariner who ploughs the angry seas upon the good ship Kangaroo'—'The three jolly Postboys drinking merrily at the Dragon'—'Kafoozleum,' a horrid Turk who had a donkey—with effective musical illustrations—and, most popular of all, a ditty about two brothers who were so much alike in form and feature that each was being constantly taken for the other, getting at last into such a state of inextricable confusion that when one of them died the other, still very much alive, was buried in his place—an excruciatingly comic climax that provokes the wildest laughter—

'They *buried* brother John,  
They *buried* brother John.  
And when I died the neighbours came  
And *buried* brother John'—

Ha! ha! ha! what a good joke! '*They buried brother John*'—ho!—ho!—ho! what a huge joke! what a unique situation!

A paved courtyard, a dark corridor, baize-lined doors divide us from Mr. Moberly, and yet these rousing choruses must surely reach his musical ear; but then *he* does not govern 'The House'—we seldom see him except at evening prayers, or outside the precincts hurrying to obey the Clock in the Quad like the rest of us, or astride his great white nag on half holidays—and now and then he asks us to breakfast with him. We govern ourselves—or rather the seat of authority is at the oval table in the window of the Hall where sit our betters, who rule by laws uncoded, and get prompt obedience—and of course we lower ones owe them service. The Willums—old and young—clean the boots, and wait, and serve us out our rations of tea and coffee, of sugar and candles, and other odds and ends—but we sweep out the great ones' studies. But it is no such heavy task that one need complain—to strew the tea leaves from the pot, to wield the cleansing broom, the feathery duster—only another lesson in the school of life that inculcates the dignity of labour, the need to bend one's own unruly will. Nay, it is a privilege to move in these sacred places and see how our betters live, to dust



their heavy tomes, their silver cups. Thus is ambition fed until one yearns to soar.

Be careful how you touch the pretty cap of green velvet that hangs on yonder antler-tip, decked with golden bands and tassel, and the acorn that is our badge—for it is hard to win. Full of difficulties is the path to the stars—many a battle must you live through, many a fierce scrummage, many a stinging hack endure before one like it will crown your brow. Its owner has just pinned an edict on the door of the Hall—'Whites v. Stripes'—so runs the heading. A bitter day in freezing January, the wind in the east, giving shrewd nips to us poor Spartans with but the chilly ducks to protect our lower limbs, a jersey all too thin, of white or striped with bands of blue. It is the first game of the term. They call it a ball, but it is more like a great leather egg, most difficult to kick, coming at one like a bomb, hard to catch and hard to hold, slippery with the mud of the churned-up field, and ever the object of fierce contention, twisting and twirling in the scrummage—the swaying mass of whites and stripes, butting and heaving until one hears the ribs go crack, legs and feet moving like the shuttle in the loom to get it through the *mêlée*. Woe now to the shrinking new one who hangs reluctant on the outer r'm—the watchful half-backs are just behind—and I need say no more.

But what an appetite rewards us!—how sweet the evening meal—the frizzling sausage on the milky bed of mashed, the juicy cutlet crumbed and brown, the steak and kidney pie well jellied, the ruddy ham—see the bearers come trooping up the road with the smoking dishes on their heads—the term has just begun, and money jingles in our pockets.

So *Floreat Rugbeia*! Alas! terms come and go so fast—terms short, and terms long; faces change; new boys are grown old; trebles deepen into bass; Temple goes himself—how proud we are to think that he is now a Bishop!—and in tones that falter more than once bids us all good-bye in the old gray Quad—the Clock has struck the hour.

\* \* \* \* \*

Many a year speeds on—and one day another pupil of Rugbeia and I, going towards Pall Mall, meet him once again by the austere Athenæum, and by some common instinct cap him in the old, old way. Very grim he looks, and frail, and bowed down with the burden of many, many years, but he stops at once, and though we



had never faced him except to get our lines for cutting Chapels, I much regret to say, and he knows us not from any other sons of Adam, he shakes us by the hand, and asks our names, and so on. The familiar salutation has touched a chord within him, his thoughts fly far away to the old gray Quad once more, and when he turns to go he gives us both his blessing—'God bless you! God bless you!'

Few there are, I trow, who have been so blessed by an Archbishop of Canterbury in great London's roar, and we both felt humbled, and all the better for it with just a little moisture in our eyes—and my friend particularly had been a pretty pickle in his time, but it is notorious that pickles mix with pickles.

Eheu! eheu! these memories stir one to the quick, and now come crowding on each other's heels—but old Willum is shutting the big gates—'tis time for Lock Up.



### THE HAPPIEST HOURS.

THERE were three packets made of different coloured paper, and they contained powders of similar hue. No directions had been given in regard to the amount to be used ; to avoid the risk of an overdose one half only of each packet was tilted into the palm of the hand, and emptied into the water. The glass shook as he raised it to his lips.

He vaguely expected to see the wonderful morning-room at Buckingham Palace, with a resourceful gentleman of the Household impressing upon him the number of steps that would take him to the precise centre of the room, and the number of steps that, as he turned, brought him within sword's reach. A scene, some years before, at Holy Trinity, Sloane Street, was not without its attractions. There was the hour when he met an aggressive crowd of workmen, and talked them over. Perhaps few could boast of such a wide range for selection.

'Here's luck !' said Sir Henry Dobson.

The surroundings that came to him had nothing of magnificence. The village green was worn bald in several places, but a chain which stretched from four posts reserved a space that was comparatively youthful. The last cords of the tent were being fixed by the local carpenter ; a fair scoring sheet rested on a table with a pebble at each corner to prevent the wind from interfering. The white-painted forms on the edge of the field were already occupied, and something like a cheer was given as local players arrived riding high on forty-six inch bicycles. A wagonette came with the visiting team, and lads, counting them as they descended, sighed to find the number complete. The eleven had brought a stout man who struggled into a long white coat that pulled tightly at the back : he counted pennies in a business-like way.

'Please, sir,' panted a farm labourer to the captain of the local team, 'young guv'nor's very sorry, he asked me to tell you, but one of the calves has been took ill, and he can't possibly be with you to-day.'

The lads pressed forward. They did not venture to speak, but each wore an expression which attempted to convey a proper blend of readiness and modesty.



'Henry Dobson,' said the great man, curtly, 'you!'

The teams stood aside as the home captain flung a bat into the air. 'Round!' cried the other, and it fell with the round side upwards; the visitors said gleefully, 'We're a-goin' to have first knock, and chance it!' Young women arrived now, and youths who had hoped to sit down for the afternoon were compelled by the rules to offer spaces on the white forms, which the ladies accepted with the remark, 'A shame to turn you out!' Two batsmen walked across, padded as to legs, gloved as to hands, and making drives with their bats at dock leaves. The home captain, with the new red cricket ball, set his field; one umpire gave, with waving of hand, the exact point where the bat covered the middle stump. Young Dobson saw the wicket-keeper go up at the last moment and confer, rather anxiously, with the bowler: the captain replied definitely, 'I shall send 'em down jest as I jolly well like, and all you and young Dobson have got to do is to see we don't give away too many extras!' The wicket-keeper returned gloomily and selected a distant position encroaching upon the space claimed by long-stop.

The captain took a long run that included three hops and sent down deliveries at a terrific rate; the wicket-keeper, by alertness, dodged them, and they were secured and returned smartly by Henry Dobson. The last ball of the over, after the batsman had declined to take notice of it, rose in front of the wicket-keeper; he stopped it, but danced about, bewailing his fate and declaring the missus had warned him that something would most certainly happen. Colleagues, examining his forehead, urged him, with the light-heartedness of folk where other people's misfortunes are concerned, to forget all about it. He went, with genuine reluctance, as the team crossed over, to the other wicket; Henry Dobson, in following him, experienced a stab of disappointment.

The new bowler was a gentler man in methods, but two catches were dropped, and this circumstance brought out the dormant violence of his nature. A swift ball, unexpected, took the bails, and also took the wicket-keeper well on the jaw.

'I'm done with it,' he announced, pulling off his gloves. 'Anyone else that likes to play at being Aunt Sally is welcome to the job. I'm going home now to get my missus to rub in some emberyation. If ever I want my old head knocked off, I'll offer myself for the job again.' He strode away, nursing his face carefully.



Anxious consultation took place. The captain offered the honourable post to several members of the team; they shrugged shoulders, and a few replied that they were of no use at all behind the wicket; the rest, more candid, said that with the ground in its present hard condition, and the bowling of the moment, they would rather be excused.

‘What’s that, my lad?’

‘I’ll take on the job,’ said Henry Dobson eagerly, ‘it no one else cares for it.’

‘How about your mother?’

‘She’s no use at cricket, Mr. Cheesman.’

‘But, I mean, what would she say if anything occurred to you?’

‘Let’s chance it,’ urged the boy.

A laugh came from the borders of the green as, with leg pads going well above knees and gloves much too large for him, he took his new place. He stood close up, and crouched slightly, in imitation of a notable player in the county eleven; the batsman warned him of the danger, and Henry told him, curtly, to look after himself. The captain, with a lessened speed, sent down a ball that pitched rather short, and the batsman ran out at it joyfully; five seconds later he was walking towards the tent and the scorer wrote against the entry of his name:

‘St. Dobson, b. Cheesman.’

This was only the beginning. The other bowler, generally priding himself on variety, adopted a slow, enticing manner that tempted batsmen out of their ground, and sometimes they hit the ball to the boundary, and sometimes they missed it, whereupon Henry shot out his hand, and they were stumped before they could get back into sanctuary behind the white mark. When Henry crossed, men of his side slapped him on the back, and gave congratulations; one made a public offer to take his place, but Mr. Cheesman would not hear of it. The innings had lasted fifty-five minutes, and nine wickets were down; the remaining batsmen played carefully, and, warned by the fate of their companions, took care to keep in their ground. Each run was cheered by the visitors’ tent. Local spectators prophesied grimly to each other that the two men would stay in until tea-time; miracles of the kind had happened, before now, with the tail of a team. A ball was hit up high to leg; many of the fielders were in the slips (four, to be exact) with point and cover point; they prepared to regard the flight with curiosity, but did not move. Henry Dobson, racing



well, in spite of the pads, went in the direction, and his mature friends smiled at the way in which youth squandered energy. Henry, half turning, found he had misjudged the descending ball; staggered back, and, eyes closed, put out a gloved hand.

'Don't want to exaggerate,' said Mr. Cheesman, inspecting the scoring sheet, 'and I wouldn't say it to the boy because it might make him conceited, but that catch of his was something a blind man would very much like to have seen. If he never achieves nothing more in his life, he's done pretty well to have managed that!'

He was trembling with excitement when, recovering, he came back to the current hour, and to the club library, its rows of dusty volumes, and to the three small coloured envelopes on the table. Kneading eyes, he rose and went to the small oval mirror at the side of the mantelpiece; a short laugh that was partly a gasp came as he surveyed the reflection, and tried to find there something which recalled the wonderful hour of boyhood that he had been privileged to enjoy again. It was more than a dream; he felt the quiver and animation of youth, and all the hot pride of that far-off incident was racing in his veins.

'There's some left,' he cried cheerfully. 'Come, we'll try another dose of this excellent mixture!'

He had filled the tumbler with water, when the thought came that difficulty might be found in obtaining further supplies. The caller had been sent away without any request to leave a card; the application for a sovereign—'Just to tide me over, Sir Henry!'—was sternly refused, and the old inventor had received nothing better than a permission to call again in seven days' time.

'But he can be found,' remarked Sir Henry, easily. 'I'll rent a laboratory, and keep him hard at work. That will gratify him more than anything.' He emptied the packets, lifted the tumbler. 'Many happy returns!'

He saw himself alone, this time, and in London; on the Embankment, to be precise, where folk, with no other dwellings, slept on long seats, and an occasional hansom bumped over the uneven roadway. The lad was resting elbows on the parapet, and gazing across the river at the just visible outlines of the opposite shore. Damp was in the air, and the surroundings were gloomy,



but he felt a coin in his waistcoat pocket, and whistled from sheer exuberance of spirits. Big Ben struck first the warning that an hour had finished, and then announced, in its deep sonorous manner, that a new hour had begun; the lad turned at once, and crossed the roadway, went up a hilly street, and, near the main thoroughfare, found a group of people standing at doors that were marked 'GALLERY.' They looked at him somewhat resentfully, and he stared at them in return; they accepted his presence with a sigh of resignation, and those who had been talking resumed conversation. More folk arrived, and he regarded them in a similarly defensive way.

'Excuse me,' said a girl, 'but have you seen a young gentleman about here who appeared to be looking for someone?'

'Sorry,' he replied; 'I've only just got here myself.'

'I do think it's too bad,' she declared, 'to keep a lady waiting. Besides which, it makes anyone look so conspicuous. People eye you like anything.'

'You must be prepared for that. Seen "Favart" before?'

The girl, it proved, had not seen the comic opera; had never been to the Strand Theatre, but greatly desired both experiences; the opportunity came when an offer was made by a youth, met during the summer at a boarding-house at Ramsgate, and lately encountered at Stoke Newington; the acquaintance, it appeared, was slight, but he had begged her to agree to the appointment, and it never occurred to her that he was likely to back out of it. Just showed you, though, what men were nowadays: full of promises, but nothing else. Enough to induce one to form a resolution to listen no more to the words of any young gentleman.

A horrid suspicion possessed the lad. He was on the point of blurting out a precise statement of his finances, when she found her purse, and examining the contents, remarked on the luck and good fortune of having silver in her possession.

'It's the crush I'm really frightened about,' she rattled on, 'especially on a slope like this. The swaying to and fro, beforehand, is bad enough, but when the doors open—'

'You'll be as safe as houses,' he declared, 'if you only trust yourself to me. I'm used to it. How many times do you think I've seen this piece before?' He was hurt to find that she gave the exaggerated estimate of twenty-five. 'Twice,' he announced. 'This makes the third time. I can play all the principal tunes on my landlady's piano.'



'One finger!'

'One finger,' admitted Henry Dobson, 'and a chord, now and again, down in the bass. Fond of music, may I ask?'

They were, by reason of the increased size of the crowd, well in the middle of the group, and a band of cheerful youths on the Strand side began to shoulder down the hill; those at the lower end set backs stiffly to meet this, and between the two parties the middle folk were being pressed tightly. Henry Dobson, immensely proud of his own composure, protected the girl, gave useful hints concerning the keeping down of elbows, the wise carriage of umbrellas. He encouraged her to go on chattering, and, reassured by his confidence, she answered his inquiry and gave autobiographical details, the while his arm shielded her carefully. His hand touched her waist, and as no protest came he allowed it to remain there, although the incident caused him to become dizzy and flushed. Yes, she was fond of music, in a way, but not, if you understood her, mad on it; as a fact, preferred the Olympic to theatres where comic opera was provided, and a good cry suited her better than a good laugh. All the same, it frightened her when, in melodrama, shots were fired; at these moments, she simply clutched at the nearest neighbour whether it happened to be friend or stranger. Henry, prompted by rights of seniority, said that a certain alarm was perhaps natural in a girl, but care ought to be taken in regard to chance acquaintances; in London you never knew who was who, or what was what. On his companion admitting that old friends were the truest and best, he hedged slightly and contended that everyone was entitled to repair the damages to the list caused by time or discovery, and that substitutes, if chosen with great care, could fill the vacant spaces.

'Daresay you're right,' she said, amiably. 'You know more about the world than what I do.'

He became agitated by the thought that once up the wooden stairs and once seats on forms had been obtained, he would be in the company of this delightful young woman for fully three hours. Florence St. John singing 'To age's dull December,' Henry Bracy, and with funny Mr. Ashley making her laugh with his Marshal Saxe, it ought not to be a difficult matter to kiss her just below the ear where a short curl strayed.

'One of my sisters is engaged,' she remarked. It was possible



something had led up to the remark ; for minutes his thoughts had been wandering. 'She met him quite by chance, just as I've met you. And he told her he was in the bicycle line, and said how well he was getting on in the trade, and she naturally took off about seventy-five per cent. from what he told her, and, lo and behold, when she got to know his people, and find out about him, it appeared that everything he'd told at the start was absolute gospel truth. Mother says she's never come upon a case of the kind in the whole course of her existence. They're going to take a double-fronted house, and keep a servant, and go to Cromer for their honeymoon. I don't suppose any such luck as that will ever come my way.'

It was at this moment that the struggle began. Someone managed, by extraordinary dexterity, to glance at a watch, and mentioned aloud that it only wanted ten minutes ; the announcement seemed to be taken as a word of command, and the crowd, that had been surging gently for some time, started erratic movements. Henry Dobson and the girl and their close neighbours were borne down the hill, and, gazing over heads, found to their dismay they were two houses distant from the gallery doors : with the support of folk below they pressed their way back to the original position, and with one unanimous voice begged and ordered that crowding should now cease. The pushing came next from the further pavement, and the two were crushed up near to the doors, so tightly packed that their faces were close together ; she screamed, and Henry Dobson anticipated later possibilities by kissing her under the pretence that it was done to restore calm. The girl cried, 'Oh, let me get out of it !' but here was a request that could not be granted ; the crowd did its best to meet her wishes by sending them once more down the hill. This cancelled any desire the girl might have had to escape ; she fought with the rest of the excited people ; shouted a war-cry ; helped to gain the way up the hill once more. A sound came of the opening of locks ; the pressure increased from every quarter.

'Mind the ladies !' called voices, imperatively.

Just in front a narrow lane was made. The girl hurried through, and it closed quickly. The upper portion of the crowd charged afresh, and Henry Dobson, with other gallant youths, gave way to superiority of numbers. When, some minutes later, he, dishevelled and collar torn, made his way through the passage to the pay-box, the man inside shook his head.



'No room, my laddie,' he announced. 'No room for even another sardine!'

The head waiter upset a chair, either by accident or design, in entering the library. Apologising, he mentioned that Sir Henry was now the only member in the club, hinted that when Sir Henry decided to depart the place could close for the night. Sir Henry, elated by the experience of the last two hours, and looking forward to similar joys in the future, expressed his regret at detaining the staff and, crumpling the coloured envelopes, threw them into the fire.

'Knowing you didn't want to be interrupted, Sir Henry, I refrained from bothering you. But that old chap who called and saw you,—he was taken bad down near St. James's Place. Very bad indeed!'

'Tell me the name of the hospital, and I'll go there at once to see him.'

'Sorry, Sir Henry,' said the head waiter, tray in hand, 'but the mortuary is where they've conveyed him to!'

W. PETT RIDGE.



*THE SIMPLE LIFE ON A POULTRY-RANCH  
IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.*

EVERY woman has her private 'castle in Spain,' and as several girls have confessed to me that their particular 'château' was a poultry-ranch in British Columbia, I think it may be interesting to have a glimpse of the life as it really is when stripped of its glamour.

Two years ago I went to Canada in order to investigate at first hand the conditions of domestic life in the Dominion, and last year I thought it might be useful to get information as to how the large class of 'outdoor' women would fare did they cross the Atlantic. In order to accomplish this I wrote to every woman whose name was mentioned as doing work on the land, asking whether I could be received as a paying-guest.

Various disappointments awaited me in my enterprise. Two women, for example, who had been considerably advertised, had given up their respective farm and poultry-ranch; others could not receive me, their accommodation being too limited; and in one case two ladies, represented as dairy-farming on the Fraser River, turned out to have a four-acre lot in a little town, a bunch of poultry in lieu of cows, and a Chinaman working their garden!

However, as I stayed altogether in ten places between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, I was enabled to gather some information as to women's work on the land from Nova Scotia to Vancouver Island, and it may interest my readers to hear about my visit to an Englishwoman settled in one of the valleys of British Columbia, and taking up poultry-rearing as a livelihood.

When the train deposited me at the little station, my hostess, whom I will call Miss Brown, made her appearance with a wheelbarrow in which to convey my belongings to her log cottage near at hand, and appeared surprised to see the modest 'grip' and hold-all which held my effects for a week's visit. I was soon ushered into her kitchen, the living-room, where a loaf, butter, and cake were laid on the table, and the kettle was on the stove boiling in readiness for a welcome cup of tea. This was my first experience of a woman who did both outdoor and indoor work, and I was amazed at the amount Miss Brown could accomplish during the day.

She kept two hundred head of poultry, mostly prize birds, and sold her cockerels at 4s. apiece, getting 3s. a dozen for her eggs



during the winter, and 12s. for a sitting of fifteen eggs from her prize birds, and was also fortunate in having a market for her produce in the shape of an hotel manager who called for her fowls and eggs, thus saving her the trouble and expense of freight. She informed me that she had started with only £200 of capital, the rent of her house with three to four acres of land, mostly uncleared, and three hen-houses with runs, being £12 a year. As the valley lay in the Dry Belt she paid 12s. annually for water to irrigate her crops, that for household purposes being carried from a spring in buckets.

I saw very soon that the 'Simple Life' is no joke for a woman living alone, however strong she may be. She must learn to do without many things that in England are looked upon as necessities, and she must toil without ceasing.

Miss Brown certainly fulfilled this ideal, as she worked like a slave. She fed her fowls three times a day, and her chickens five times, kept their houses beautifully clean, and during my visit was engaged in making a new hen-run, felling sturdy trees with blows of her axe, sawing them into lengths, and often shouldering long trunks that I myself could hardly have moved.

Besides this she was busy with the quarter of an acre that she had laid out in vegetables, most of which had been ruined by severe mid-June frosts, so that we had only the wild spinach to eat, and she was pricking out hundreds of cabbage plants which, when ripe, would be stored in the underground root-house in order to supply the fowls with greenstuff during the winter months. My hostess had made her own 'flume' or wooden conduit to convey the water from a stream outside her property, and could turn the life-giving fluid on to the lower beds, watering those at a higher level by hand. When I helped with these gardening operations I was sorely hindered by the mosquitoes that hovered around us in clouds, making me almost credit a Canadian who asserted that this particular valley was the original home of this pest. In spite of the heat (it was the end of June), I was obliged to wear a gauze veil, my feet and ankles swelled to double their usual size, and after a couple of days of intense irritation, followed by sleepless nights, I resorted to the expedient of encasing my legs in paper bandages worn under my stockings, this simple remedy proving most efficacious. As the cottage was by no means mosquito-proof in spite of our efforts, I used a net for my head at night, our active visitors apparently never resting for an instant, though Miss Brown suggested that perhaps they worked in shifts!

Besides clearing her bush, which was part of the primeval forest,



cutting down and sawing up trees to feed the insatiable stove, and carrying many buckets of water from her spring, my hostess had to do her cooking, washing, and housework. She made her own clothes, and not only baked her bread, but actually sold this commodity to one or two of the neighbours. Unluckily, during my visit, owing to the fall in the temperature at night, or to inferior flour, or stale yeast-cakes, she produced three quite uneatable batches, and we had to subsist on baking-powder scones, as the bread was too heavy to toast and would have brought disaster on the fowls had they been allowed to feed upon it. Work as hard as she might, Miss Brown soon saw that she could not gain a livelihood from her birds, even when they reached the proud total of five hundred head, and she frankly acknowledged that poultry did not begin to pay until after two years or even longer, and then only in a district where grain was cheap. She was therefore eager to add a cow, bees, and pigs to her establishment, the pig being as skilful in paying the rent in the Dominion as he is in Ireland; but strong as she was she felt that she could not do this unaided, and I urged upon her the desirability of taking a partner.

It seemed to me that her life was a desolate one in a country where all were fully occupied with their own concerns, and had really no time to help others save in exceptional cases of emergency. Miss Brown was fortunate in possessing some kind neighbours, Old Country folk to whom she could apply at a pinch, but she must struggle through the daily round unaided, and, like many women in such circumstances, she did not trouble to feed herself properly.

High hills rose on either side of the long valley, bear and wolf were seen occasionally, while after dusk the long-drawn howl of the coyote would ring eerily through the darkness, this animal destroying much of the poultry in old days when there were only very few settlers in the valley. Late one night, when I had just dropped off to sleep, my hostess called from her room to ask whether I had heard a curious rattling noise at the kitchen door, saying that she must go out to investigate. Accordingly I roused myself, and armed with a lantern we sallied forth, and I was interested to see four black-and-white striped, bushy-tailed skunks, this being my first acquaintance with these animals. The creatures were not in the least flurried at our appearance, and made off slowly, looking at us with interest. To our consternation they vanished one by one down a hole under the house, and we hoped that they would never be induced to discharge



the terrible odour for which they are notorious. Miss Brown said that a young man in the neighbourhood had once caught a skunk by the tail, with the result that all his clothes had to be burnt, while later on I heard of a man who, when a skunk appeared on his verandah, left it entirely to the animal, being careful to make his exits and entrances by a window, until he knew that his unwelcome visitor had departed. Personally I never had any experience of the smell, and could hardly believe in the horrible sickness that I was assured had overtaken a trainload of passengers when the engine ran over one of these attractive-looking little animals, nor the tale of some friends who awoke in the middle of the night choking with the fell odour that was wafted through their windows.

Skunks are great robbers of poultry-roosts, but Miss Brown felt confident that they could not 'burgle' her hen-houses, and was far more concerned at the visits of hawks. She said that her fowls were most intelligent, and always rushed under bushes, uttering a warning cry, if one of these birds made its appearance. The ordinary hawk swoops down upon its prey, but my hostess affirmed that British Columbia produced a small brown species that, ignoring all the rules of the game, pursued the chickens on foot among the scrub, and with a cunning almost diabolical would pounce upon the luckless birds when they imagined themselves to be quite secure.

Much pleasanter denizens of the valley were the exquisite blue-birds, a pair of which had built their nest in one of the hen-houses, or the fascinating little chipmunks that appeared to take a friendly interest in our doings, coming up quite close to us, and making me long to tame them, as they would make delightful pets. The ground was carpeted with a profusion of wild flowers, and though during the summer it was occasionally 100°F. in the shade, yet this temperature in dry heat is by no means unendurable, and the spring and autumn are delightful. In winter the thermometer sometimes registers 30°F. below zero, but this is only a 'snap' of two or three days' duration; and as a rule there is brilliant sunshine all the time, and my hostess said that her fowls would lay throughout the winter if well fed.

The ground is usually hard to the end of April, so that little ploughing can be attempted before the beginning of May.

A small river ran at the end of Miss Brown's domain, and here she used to bathe in summer. The firs and thick scrub rose all round the water, and it was hard to find our way by an overgrown



track—in fact so lonely was the spot that I should never have been surprised to come upon a bear or a wolf. Up this stream rush myriads of the ugly hump-back salmon at spawning time; they fight, jostle one another out of the water, and arrive in a terrible condition, with fins torn off and mutilated bodies. And then these crowds of big fish die, making it impossible to go near the river for some time, so awful is the stench.

The half-dozen ladies in this valley did their own housework, and were most hospitable in asking me to their homes. To any superficial observer one young couple in particular seemed to have their lines cast in pleasant places. The pretty, well-furnished bungalow had many contrivances for lessening labour, and the husband showed me with pride how he had sunk the well underneath the verandah outside the kitchen, and was bringing the pump into the room itself, thus saving much discomfort during the long months of snow and frost.

The house stood in a beautiful tract of forest that sloped down to a river, and on a summer's day it seemed an ideal residence for the parents and their pretty baby. After a while, as we enjoyed a dainty afternoon tea, the wife gave me a glimpse of the reverse side of the shield. 'This is a hard country for women who have been accustomed to servants in England,' she remarked, 'but it is rather difficult to explain why. I think it is the monotony of the life that is so trying, and if you are not well you must go on just the same. My husband is very good, and helps me all he can, but of course he has his hands full with the farm. He often tells me to let things go if I am tired, but if I did that I should be quite overwhelmed. Three hot meals a day to prepare, baby to look after, my bread to bake, my weekly wash (oh, how I hate that!), and my house to keep in order. It doesn't sound much, I know, especially as there are no social distractions here, but it is a fearful grind year in, year out, and it is impossible to get anyone to help if you want to go away for a change; and, since you cannot buy food as in England, you have to depend entirely on yourself.'

At a neighbouring farm things were far easier, as the parents were helped by their three tall, good-looking daughters, who acted the part of hired men and seemed most competent young women. One could handle a team as well as any man, and helped her father with the ploughing; another had a 'way' with cows and could do anything with those somewhat impassive animals, while all three took their turn in rounding-up the stock which had free pasturage



here. It was a pretty sight to see the youngest girl gallop off after the cows, her fair hair falling over her shoulders as she managed her big mount with consummate ease, and skilfully manœuvred her straying charges to the barn at milking time. Mrs. Gray made the poultry her particular department, and expected to get a pound apiece at Christmas for her fine flock of turkeys. Of course the housework was a mere bagatelle, with so many women taking a turn at it, and this family seemed well on the way to success in the land of their adoption. Mrs. Gray said that her husband had been 'stung,' *Anglicè* cheated, when he had bought his land, and she told me that one day she asked a Canadian why the English were considered to be so credulous, and why they so often got 'soaked' over business transactions. 'This is how it is,' the man answered. 'When you are travelling on an old-established waggon-road, you just jog along and pay no heed, but if you are crossing a mountain-trail you must attend to every foot of the way if you don't want to come to harm. Now you English have got so accustomed to the jog-trot waggon-roads of the Old Country that it takes you quite a time to see that you are on the mountain-trail in a new country that is "on the make," and that you must keep a good look-out if you don't want trouble.'

I had not been many hours in the valley before I grasped that WORK, spelt in capitals, was the order of the day, and I was amused at a lady visitor who said that she could not get over her surprise at finding no flower gardens round the ranches. For my part I should have been much surprised if there *had* been, for the prose of life is so insistent here that there is little room for the poetry. Everyone works 'full steam ahead' during the summer, as the long winter that covers the land with a mantle of dry powdery snow has to be taken into account. There is none too much time to plough and sow and reap, stock must be fed during seven months of the year, and, as no coal is used, every prudent householder prepares a big wood pile from the briskly burning cotton-wood trees which are plentiful in the district.

It was a hot July day when I left plucky Miss Brown with many wishes for her success, and the train bore me along the fertile valley which after a while turned into a dreary waste of barren ochre-tinted hills dotted with sage bushes, and I felt somewhat depressed when the conductor told me that I must wait for eight hours at the junction where I had to change into my train for Vancouver, as there had been a 'wash-out' on the line.



I took my belongings to the little hotel, and found that the landlady was a Shrewsbury woman, who warmed to me on finding that I had visited her native town. 'It is the dream of my life to get back and go to the flower show,' she said, 'and sometimes I wonder at myself for staying in a desert like this, with hardly a green plant to be seen. Oh, it is an awful place!'

I endorsed her view when I set forth to explore, crossing the bridge over the broad river, and seeing no alleviation of the universal barrenness save a few groups of fine Lombardy poplars.

A party of Indians, evidently out for a holiday, attracted my attention. Two buggies, with fringed parasols instead of hoods, held strikingly dressed men and their squaws. One lady wore a yellow skirt and had bound up her head 'à la négresse' in a gaudy bandana handkerchief, while Indians in 'chaps,' cow-boy hats, and many-coloured belts rode between the carriages. There was no animation, no laughing or chatter, and all passed along apparently totally uninterested in their surroundings.

At eleven o'clock that night I joined a group of people on the platform, but we had not waited long before an official marked up on the blackboard that the train would not make its appearance until one o'clock in the morning. Accordingly most of us moved into the waiting-room, and I attached myself to a woman who was going to Vancouver Island with her husband and four small children. The poor little things were longing to go to sleep, and lay stretched out on the benches, but it was impossible to do much for their comfort, as the room soon became overcrowded.

I was accosted by a well-dressed young man, who asked me in a strong Scottish accent whether I was going down the valley that I had just left, and when I replied that I was bound for Vancouver he said that the hard seats of the waiting-room would be his couch for the night. 'Why don't you go to the hotel?' I inquired. 'Oh, they would charge me a dollar for my bed there,' was the answer. When he had turned away the Canadian woman beside me laughed, saying, 'That's a Scotsman all over. He'd rather sit up all night than pay a dollar for his bed.' She might have been right, but I found out later that a prosperous-looking exterior does not invariably denote a full purse.

At last the lights of the train were sighted, and we heard the clanging of the engine-bell as the high cars moved into the dépôt. There was a rush for seats—of course 'sleepers' were out of the question—and, cramped up in a corner of a so-called 'first-class'



carriage, I had plenty of time to think about Miss Brown and her prospects as we slid along through the night.

I felt that she was emphatically one of that class of 'out-door' women that the Colonial Intelligence League for Educated Women<sup>1</sup> is trying to benefit by the establishment of a small 'mixed' farm in British Columbia, the Princess Patricia Ranch. Here the girl trained in the minor branches of agriculture can take up poultry, dairy work, the management of pigs and bees, or small fruit and vegetable culture, and is given free board and lodging in exchange for her services on the farm. After six months or a year she will have learnt much about local conditions of soil, climate, management of stock, the best way to dispose of produce, and will probably form partnerships with some of the workers before taking up land on her own account. Thus she can gain invaluable experience of Canada without risking a penny of her capital, and as there is an enormous demand for poultry, fruit, and so on, her venture, when made, is almost certain to be successful.

Miss Brown was my first experiment in the character of a paying-guest, but I made several others, and in case any of my readers think of following my example I must drop a word of warning to the effect that the visitor will not be particularly welcome if she does nothing to help in the house.

I remember arriving at one farm where the mistress remarked as we sat at supper, 'I have had such bad toothache lately that I ought to go into town to see the dentist. Would you mind taking over things to-morrow morning and getting dinner ready?' Of course I agreed, after stipulating that the dampers of the stove should be explained to me. This was a wise precaution, and an Englishwoman unused to the country told me that she had a disagreeable experience through neglecting it. She was staying on a farm and offered to cook the Sunday dinner while the entire party went off to church, but on their return the 'roast' was still raw, as she had not understood how to admit the heat into the oven! Every stove I came across in Canada seemed different from every other stove, and with regard to this special one I was told that it could easily set the house on fire were I not careful!

When my hostess left me I set to work at the breakfast wash-up for seven persons, wiped over the white oilcloth table-cover, swept the floors of kitchen and dining-room, and relaid the table for the mid-day meal. My own bedroom had of course to be done, and fresh water

<sup>1</sup> Office, 36 Tavistock Place, W.C.



carried up, and then I felt that I had better start my cooking operations. A big rice pudding was put to bake slowly, the usual tough steak being reserved to the last; half a pailful of new potatoes had to be washed and scraped, and many Indian corn-cobs removed from their sheathings. This is fascinating work, for after tearing off the swathing leaves of delicately-tinted green one comes upon a mass of silky, cream-coloured filaments that surround the cob, and emerge from the top of the husk in a kind of plume. The cobs ought not to be overboiled, as then they harden; but when soft, smeared with butter, sprinkled with pepper and salt, and gnawed 'à la Canadienne' by holding an end in each hand, they are a food fit for the Gods.

At one place where I stopped, the 'batterie de cuisine' was so limited that when I wanted to boil potatoes and greens, and asked where the second saucepan was, I was told to cook the two vegetables in the same receptacle! Here also I found no washing apparatus in my room, and was offered the loan of a tin pan, but was told I must not keep it as it was used for bread-making, laundry work, and the daily wash-ups of crockery. To this arrangement I could not consent, and paid a hasty visit to the little store, where I provided myself with a jug and basin.

On one occasion I came in for a strenuous washing-day, helping with a big batch of clothes, turning the wringer until my arms ached, and taking out baskets of snowy garments to hang on the lines in the hot sunshine and fragrant scent of the pines. Or I took a turn at fruit-picking, accompanying my hostess for the time being to a fruit-ranch where I got taken on as one of the 'hands,' and spent a pleasant morning among the raspberry canes, mosquitoes on this occasion being conspicuous by their absence.

When I was in Nova Scotia the apple season was at its height, and I amused myself in the packing shed of one farm by helping to nail together baskets which I filled with carefully-graded plums, or assisting in packing the big barrels with fine rosy-cheeked apples.

There was something very enjoyable in these glimpses of the 'daily round,' as they put me in touch with so many different aspects of life in the Dominion, and I will end this paper with the prettiest compliment ever paid me, and which brought the tears into my eyes when I heard it. As one of my hostesses saw me off she said a little sadly, 'I shan't be able to leave home at all this year, but your visit has been such a refreshment that I feel it has been just as good as a holiday, and I shall count it as mine.'

ELLA C. SYKES.



TWO SINNERS.<sup>1</sup>

BY MRS. DAVID G. RITCHIE.

## CHAPTER XXII

THE events of the next two days passed with a strange unreality. What stood out most definitely to Maud was the solitary evening she spent on that first day, when she tore page by page of Ursula's diary and burnt it at the fire, heart-sick as she did so. Ursula would not have wished it to be kept. Then letters came by the morning and afternoon posts, and among the letters that arrived none came from Father Fitzherbert. There was a good deal to be done. The Vicar had come to see her at once and was eager to do anything that he could. He even went to the Brighton station to meet Lady Dorothy and Stella and take them to their rooms at Rottingdean.

Most of the arrangements had to be made at once—before their arrival. However, when they did arrive Maud found that they had no views of their own and had taken for granted that she would decide everything, and that they were prepared to be satisfied with her arrangements.

'You will come back with me?' was indeed what was uppermost in Lady Dorothy's mind, and she was unable to suppress the question, though she asked it in a tone that implied that there could be no question about it. The funeral was to be on Saturday morning, and Maud begged to be allowed to stay on by herself at the farm till the late afternoon of that day. Lady Dorothy made no difficulty; she and Stella would go back together. All she wanted was the certainty of being in sole possession of Maud—that certainty filled up the vacancy of her life and gave her courage. She was sincerely sorry about Ursula, and shocked and rather remorseful at the thought that there had been no member of the family to minister to her last wants.

As to Stella, it was her first experience of death, and she was overwhelmed by it. After all, Ursula had been the only mother that she had known, and she walked over from Rottingdean to see

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1915, by Mrs. David G. Ritchie, in the United States of America.



the room which Ursula had used and to see her step-sister's body lying peacefully in the coffin, with a pain at the heart that she had never felt in her life before.

In looking over and in packing Ursula's things Maud had found Ursula's will. She had opened and read it to see if it gave any directions about the funeral. There were none except what Maud knew already, that the grave was to be in the churchyard in the hollow of the Downs behind the farm.

The will was very short and simple, and Maud saw that she was made sole executor, that half the capital was to be in her trust on Stella's behalf, and that the other half was to be hers, Maud's, absolutely.

In order that Stella should feel that Maud was not leaning on her rights as executrix, she brought the will down into the sitting-room and gave it to Stella to read, and then went out of the room, as she could not bear to see the paper being unfolded.

When she returned she found Stella huddled in the great chair, crying bitterly.

'Stella!' said Maud, for she had never known her sister cry like this before, not even when she took her upstairs to the door of Ursula's room.

Stella got out of the chair, came to Maud, and flung herself on her neck.

'Ursula was so just,' was all she could articulate. 'She didn't want to—but she thought it was right.' Maud understood.

George Broughton came down to the funeral. He arrived on Friday night, and early on Saturday morning the four mourners, followed by the farm people and the nurse, walked behind the coffin, which was carried by the footpath over the ridge of down into the tiny churchyard.

There were no traces left of the recent storm, except that they could hear the sound of the sea distinctly as they walked in silence. At the ridge of down overlooking the dean there lay, suddenly discovered by the eye, the little grey church with its squat spire, a small grey vicarage in a clump of trees, with a cluster of labourers' cottages straggling down to a narrow, sluggish, chalky brook at the bottom. Beyond that lay a valley, unseen, and a shoulder of down blocking the view to the horizon. The sky was a clear blue, with heavy clouds drifting low towards the north.

The coffin-bearers and mourners descended the dean, sheltered here from the keen but gentle breeze that came up from the sea.



The sun was almost hot on their heads as they moved slowly towards the church. The tiny grey church, with its little grey churchyard, looked so much the 'home' of all true lovers of the Downs that Maud felt a momentary comfort in her heart.

They saw the coffin lowered and the earth thrown upon it. They laid flowers round the spot, and they all went away, except Maud. She went into the church for a moment and looked round it. Ursula must have looked at these short, stout, homely Norman pillars, and at the little altar under that deep rose window. She must have—until she became too ill to get as far—she may have looked, as Maud did at that moment, through the rounded southern door out to the sunshine lying on the mounds of turf outside. Maud walked back to the farm and sat in Ursula's room till she knew that the grave must be covered in and the dead left in peace, and the churchyard empty of living intruders. It was early in the afternoon when she went back again to the churchyard. The sun was beginning to settle down in the west, it was already deepening to a clear delicate orange and gilding the grey walls of the church. The tombstones were also gilded, and the white flowers on Ursula's grave were tinged with the faintest yellow.

Maud rearranged the flowers herself. There would be now until the end of her life something about that small spot in the churchyard that was personal, something familiar and yet inexplicably strange, because death is strange. That spot held part of her own past, a past that was gone from her and yet in some obscure form of memory there—lying at her feet.

Maud lingered on till the sun sank below the ridge of down into the southern sea and the sky became flushed with crimson. Then the air grew colder, and the church and the graves became a little dim. A cypress close to Ursula's grave was trembling in all its leaves, and at the western horizon against the crimson sky Maud could see when she looked up a little clump of withered trees with their branches moving restlessly. The dark rampart of clouds that had perpetually drifted at the northern horizon was still there, still drifting, and yet as they drifted being replaced by new clouds that seemed to come up from below in never-ending procession. The crimson gradually paled into rose pink, and the rampart of drifting clouds and the clump of withered trees darkened. So did the cypress close at hand, and the light paled on the church, and the stones at the head of the scattered graves. Maud bent over her sister's grave for a last farewell, and then



resolutely turned her face to the south. As she climbed the narrow footpath she turned and looked back at the church, the churchyard, and the village houses behind them. A faint mist from the bottom of the dean was creeping over them—it had not yet reached the church and churchyard. But darkness was settling on the whole valley—the cypress close to Ursula's grave had turned black and looked as if it were standing motionless. Maud gazed at the west, and it was as if some superhuman artist hand had stippled all the pink sky with black and had turned it into a marvellous, melancholy amethyst. The little clump of withered trees on the long, smooth ridge was as black as the cypress there below. A cold gust of wind met her as she reached the top of the down. She turned once again and looked down. All behind her lay in obscurity; all outlines had disappeared; nothing remained but a great empty abyss of mist, in the chilly heart of which she knew lay Ursula's grave.

She hurried along towards the farmhouse, which was standing plainly against the clear twilit sky. As she got nearer, nearer yet, a star came out over the sea, minute, bright, and steady.

The old farmer and a farm lad were waiting at the gate for her. They were already loading a small cart with things that had belonged to Ursula and that Maud had packed. They told her that below, on the Newhaven road, a taxi was waiting to take her to the station. It had come punctually to time. It was twenty minutes past four.

Maud went into the house for a moment to say good-bye to the farmer's wife, and a letter was handed to her. It had come by the afternoon's post. The writing was a man's. It was the letter that she had been waiting for at every post. It had come at last. A sense of suffocation seized Maud as she took it into her hand. She had to compel herself to show no emotion.

With the letter in her hand she walked into the sitting-room. It was almost dark there; only the light of the fire enabled her to see. All Ursula's own possessions had gone, but there was the great chair, the narrow, hard sofa with its striped woollen antimacassar, and the little table in the middle. The three people who had been most significant to her in her life had all been in this room, and in this room Maud prayed for strength to bear what the letter might contain, and into the prayer she put Ursula's name; it came naturally—both the prayer and name. Maud did not doubt that, whatever there was of Eternal and Ultimate, Ursula had always been



and would now be a part of it. Then she went out of the room and closed the door gently behind her, the letter still unopened.

She bade a brief good-bye to the farm people, and then went out into the cold night air. It was almost dark. She followed the lumbering cart, steeling her heart against self-pity and forcing herself into an attitude of resignation. She gave directions to the driver of the cart about the luggage and went to the door of the taxi. The chauffeur asked for a direction.

'The Brighton station,' she said, and she got into the taxi and shut the door after her.

The farmhouse was not visible—it was merged into the darkness of the approaching night.

She felt the car move. Then she broke open the letter, and, making herself deaf to the inward clamour of her heart, she read the lines by the light of the lamp:

'DEAR MISS MONCKTON,—The doctors are satisfied with his progress. If you have anything you want to say to me, write.

'Yours sincerely,

'JAMES FITZHERBERT.'

'Thank God!' was all she could say. She pulled the window of the car down and leaned out to speak to the chauffeur, who slackened immediately. 'Go to Hove station instead of the Brighton station,' she said, 'and, as soon as you can, get on to the old coast road and go all along the front till you have to turn up to the Hove station.'

She left the window quite down, and breathed in the fresh cold air in deep draughts. Then she read the letter over and over again. There was hope—hope for him—hope!

She could not lean back; all her muscles were tightened and her nerves were strung up, and her thoughts worked at high pressure. She watched the lights as she glided past them. She felt the car turn abruptly down towards the sea, and very soon they were on the parade in front of Sussex Square. She peered keenly at the windows of their old lodgings as she passed—lodgings where so much had happened. There were lights in their windows! Alas, alas, no Ursula there—that dimmed the joy—that memory must always dim her joy. Once she put her head out of the window and looked at the sea. It was making a fretful sound, dragging at the steep shingled beach, and before her lay miles of curving lights stretching away to Hove and then dimly on to the ancient



basin of Aldington and on to the harbour of Portslade. She drew in her head and sat back in her corner. They passed the first pier, crowded with lights; then, as they went on, they passed the last pier; it was almost in darkness. They reached Hove, and now Maud closed the window towards the sea and opened the other window, and, sitting close at it, watched for Princes Hotel. Was his room facing the sea? Which of the lighted windows would be his? Here was the hotel—full of lights—which was his? The car sped past the hotel. It was gone, and Maud sank back into her corner. Did he know that Ursula had passed away? Was he well enough, strong enough to be told any news? Was he being nursed well enough? Would they keep him quiet enough? Would they really save him every shock, every unnecessary emotion? Oh, she would not trust them! They might do something foolish, something neglectful, and he would perhaps suffer for it for the rest of his life! London was so far from Hove. She had never thought of that before; it was cruelly far off! Supposing he had a relapse, if such a thing was possible in his case—suppose he were to die after all—or suppose he was never to become really well? But Fitzherbert had said that the doctors were satisfied; that sounded as if he might recover completely—if only he was being nursed properly! He was having done for him all that wealth could do. There was a sting in those words of Fitzherbert's. Love can do so much more than wealth, and Lionel had no one watching over him who loved him. A hired nurse might omit something important—she wouldn't see all that was wanted with the thousand eyes of love; she would not think, with the subtle ingenuity of love, of all the possible ways of averting danger! It was Maud's own fault that he was there alone with only nurses. If she had been able to love him she would have been there looking after him; if she had understood all that was best in him, instead of seeing only his faults, she would have been there watching over him!

The taxi turned inland, and in a few minutes it stood at the Hove railway station. Maud got out slowly; the porter told her that she had only three minutes to spare, but she did not hasten. She bought her ticket and got into the train just as it was starting.

She sat back in her corner and began to think again. How could she ever make Lionel respect her again? He had trusted her, and then found she wasn't to be trusted! There came back to her a vivid picture of that last afternoon at Brown Street. She



saw again the look that Lionel had given her when he was standing in the middle of the drawing-room. She remembered the exact tone in which he had told her that he was going to sing something for her alone that the others would not understand. Then that song—that hymn.

Now she understood his profound sympathy, his keen desire to read the world with her eyes. Simply for her sake, he was trying to think with her thoughts.

If Ursula had heard that song—sung as he sang it—she would have known at once the love that lay behind it. And with these thoughts crowding into her brain Maud drifted farther and farther into the darkness, away from the man who was lying so still in his room at the Princes Hotel. Fitzherbert had said 'Write, if you have anything to say'! Anything to say?

Maud found pencil and paper and began to write. When she got home she would copy it out in ink and have it posted at once. It would reach Father Fitzherbert at Brighton on Sunday morning.

What she wrote was :

'DEAR FATHER FITZHERBERT,—Thank God for your news but you send me no details, and I am still so anxious.

'Yours sincerely,

'MAUD MONCKTON.'

### CHAPTER XXIII.

FOR the time being Stella's domestic troubles seemed to be providentially lightened. She was so much softened by her grief at Ursula's death and so grateful to the memory of the dead that—for the first time in her life—she felt passionately eager to give somebody pleasure.

A brilliant idea occurred to her. It was so brilliant and so obvious that she wondered whether Maud might not think of it too and forestall her. In order to make this impossible she put her idea into objective reality with no delay, and about a week after their return from Rottingdean Stella arrived at No. 2 Brown Street, looking very handsome and mysterious in her black hat and veil, and carrying with some innocent ostentation, under her arm, a small basket.



With the insight born of much previous suffering, Jackson perceived that the basket contained a future menace to the peace of the household above and below stairs.

Stella said, 'Is Miss Maud at home?' and her two dimples were very deeply set in her cheeks as she asked the question.

Yes, Miss Maud was at home.

At this Stella walked right into the hall, basket under arm, and spoke softly. 'I will run up to her room then,' she said to Jackson, 'and please tell her that I'm there waiting for her.' Stella's blue eyes were sparkling and her earrings swaying, and her dimples were hard set as she ran upstairs without stopping till she got to Maud's bedroom. There she knocked, and receiving no answer, burst in with all haste.

Jackson, with his figure stiff and his eyes stiff, and even his hair unsympathetically stiff, went in search of Maud, found her, and gave her the hated information in a voice of malignant resignation. It was a voice that portended evil, and Maud, struck by the tone of it, hurried upstairs. When she reached her room and opened the door she found Stella seated in the middle of the floor, holding a small brown Pekinese dog by a leash. The basket in which it had been brought was tossed to one corner of the room.

'Stella!' exclaimed Maud.

'Well?' said Stella smiling hard under her black hat. 'Well?'

'Is it yours?' asked Maud, with her eyebrows raised.

'Now is it likely?' said Stella. 'You know I hate household pets, whether they are cats or dogs. I can't abide them.' She laughed and snapped her fingers at the Pekinese.

'Then what are you going to do with it?'

Maud knew perfectly well what she was going to do, but she was amazed. Another Kiddie! Stella might at least have consulted her wishes in the matter; after all she would be very deeply involved if there was to be another Kiddie!

'It's my present to Aunt Dorothy,' said Stella. 'She will never have the courage to buy one herself, and yet I know she simply longs for one.'

'I think you might have told me,' said Maud.

'I thought it would be a lovely surprise,' said Stella, rather disappointed.

'It is not a surprise, it's a shock,' said Maud.

The small brown-and-black face stared up at her with its bulging eyes and sniffed into the air.



'You won't suffer, Maud, old girl; it's a silent kind,' said Stella. 'George says it'll be all right. He says it's just the very thing for Aunt Dorothy.'

'Then Aunt Dorothy won't care for it,' said Maud promptly; 'you know that, Stella. She prefers a dog that is hysterical!'

'She will worship it,' said Stella. 'It's so sweet. Look at its absurd face—and it says nothing.'

'That's the mischief—from her point of view.' Maud knelt on the floor and took up the dog, who submitted calmly, and sitting on her arm it now stared hard at Stella and sniffed in her direction.

'It really isn't so bad,' said Maud.

'I knew you'd love it,' exclaimed Stella. 'It's got a perfect character. Now I want you to go and put it into Aunt Dorothy's arms, saying that it is a present from me—will you?'

Maud rose to her feet with the dog still on her arm.

'I wonder whether she'll mind,' said Maud musingly.

'She simply aches for a dog,' said Stella, 'only she won't say so. I want you to put it in such a way that she'll feel forced to keep it. You'll do that better than I shall; if I give it to her I shall simply burst out laughing, and that won't do.' Stella got up from the floor. 'Where is Aunt Dorothy?'

'She is in the writing-room,' said Maud, still stroking the smooth small head. 'It is very sweet.'

'I knew you'd say so, after you had really examined it,' said Stella, shaking her earrings.

'Aunt Dorothy will corrupt its soul and send it eventually to hell. She won't be happy till she has trained it for the infernal regions,' said Maud softly.

'Oh, to botheration with the infernal regions,' said Stella. 'She can't make it shriek like a Pom; it's not its nature.'

'It'll acquire the power of shrieking then,' said Maud.

'It'll get too fat, that's all,' said Stella. 'Come, Maud, I simply can't wait any longer. Let us go downstairs. I shall go into the dining-room and wait there till you come and tell me how the affair is going. I want Aunt Dorothy to think I've gone, but you slip downstairs and speak to me.'

The two sisters went downstairs together till they reached the drawing-room floor; then Stella ran lightly down to the dining-room and left Maud with the dog in her arms just outside the writing-room door. Lady Dorothy was sitting at the table, writing. She saw



at a glance what Maud carried in her arms, and she stared through her glasses.

‘What’s that?’ she called out.

‘Oh, a kind of dog,’ replied Maud, looking down at the animal as if she were not sure whether it mightn’t be something else—a sort of a cat, perhaps.

‘Take it away, my dear,’ said the old lady firmly.

‘Take it where, Aunt Dorothy?’ It’s a great nuisance, but Stella has left this as a present to you. It’s bought and paid for. I suppose you will have it returned to Stella, and you know the kind of stepmother she will be; she’ll stuff it the first day and then leave it to starve. I wash my hands of it. I really can’t be responsible for it.’ Maud placed the dog on the table, where it sat and stared hard at Lady Dorothy, sniffing towards her, as was its nature to do.

Lady Dorothy looked intently at the dog through her glasses.

‘We don’t want a dog,’ said Maud. ‘I told Stella that, but it was too late; she’d got it. I wish she had consulted us beforehand. Are you going to put it in the waste-paper basket or burn it?’

The dog took a step nearer to Lady Dorothy and then moved carefully over the blotter and stepped down on to her lap—merely because it was the most obvious way of finally reaching the floor.

‘Well, little orphan,’ said Maud, putting out her hand to stroke it, ‘shall we send you back to your stepmother or consign you to the fire?’

Lady Dorothy’s soul was full of conflicting emotions. A sense of the impropriety of allowing a new dog to sit on her lap battled with her desire to have a dog sitting on her lap—especially a very small dog.

Maud suddenly moved away. ‘I quite forgot that Stella has left the basket lying about, and I am afraid it will be thrown away—’ and so saying she slipped out of the room and closed the door behind her. She ran upstairs to her room and found the basket. Then she ran downstairs and went into the dining-room. Stella was walking about the room impatiently.

‘Well?’ she asked, her face full of excitement.

‘It’s sitting on her lap,’ said Maud. ‘I have told her that if it is returned to you you will forget about it and starve it. I think that has made an impression.’

‘It isn’t true,’ said Stella indignantly. ‘But you know that



I hate an animal in the house ; it's always wanting something, and it's always in the way. Do you think she'll keep it ? Does she like it ?

'I have hopes,' said Maud.

'Perhaps I had better go now,' said Stella. 'I don't want her to find me.'

'Take the basket with you,' said Maud. 'That will help. I shall tell her that you took it away with you.'

'Oh, what fun !' said Stella. 'I do so long to know what happens.' Stella took up the basket and went into the hall with Maud. When they reached the door she turned to her sister with an expression of keen curiosity in her face. 'You don't see the paper George takes, so I have brought it with me.' Stella pulled a paper out of her muff and held it towards her sister. 'There is something in it I have marked. How it is we have never seen anything before I don't know—it just happens like that sometimes. Don't forget to look.'

Maud's face grew crimson. She took the paper silently. There was only one subject of thought in the world for Maud just now—only one subject in the 'living' world.

'You've seen it already ?' demanded Stella, blushing too at the sight of her sister's emotion.

'There is no relapse ?' she questioned, startled out of her reserve.

'Relapse ? No ! He's getting better,' said Stella as she stood gazing at Maud with her blue eyes getting more and more intense. 'Why, do you care ?'

Maud drew a long breath. If he was getting better why had not Fitzherbert sent her fresh news ? She looked away from Stella's face and said : 'It was Major Kames who looked after Ursula all those last weeks.'

Stella stood amazed. 'Major Kames ! How do you know, Maud ?'

Maud turned away. 'I know from some writing that Ursula left behind her, and also I heard from the nurse. I was only waiting to tell Aunt Dorothy till I heard that Major Kames had recovered. I can't talk about it, Stella ; it hurts me,' and she walked to the foot of the stairs.

'I hadn't the faintest idea, or I wouldn't have spoken,' said Stella.

'I know, I know,' said Maud, and she began mounting the stairs. Stella opened the hall door and went out reluctantly. She was



leaving behind so much that interested her. Anyhow, she had something of interest to startle George with when he came home. So Major Kames had looked after Ursula! Stella felt the cool November air keenly against her hot cheeks. After all, Major Kames must be a gentleman! What with the dog and with this sudden discovery about Major Kames, Stella had more to think about than her brain would hold. Suppose, after all, something came of it all. If Maud was repenting, something would come of it. It would be delightful to have a married sister at Orpenden who would ask her and George to come over continually. It would be very agreeable, and as to Aunt Dorothy, why, there she was with a new dog—what more could she want? Stella almost bounded along in the faint autumnal sunshine.

Alone in her bedroom, Maud unfolded the paper and searched for Stella's mark. There it was. With a beating heart she looked at the short paragraph. It was very short, and contained less information than she had hoped for: Major Kames was sufficiently recovered from his recent motor accident for the doctors to sanction his removal to Orpenden this week. That was all! Orpenden was nearer to town than Hove. Only thirty miles away! What did 'sufficiently recovered' really mean? Did it mean that he was able to move, to read, to listen to conversation? What did it really mean? Her letter to Fitzherbert begging for more news had not yet been answered. She must write again—at the risk of displeasing him she must write.

A knock came on her door and she hastily put away the paper. Eugénie's face appeared. 'Her ladyship wants you, Miss Maud.'

Had Aunt Dorothy just seen a similar paragraph in the *Morning Post*?

Maud went downstairs, bracing herself up for the interview. She meant to be very calm, to say as little as possible, and yet to say all that was necessary. She almost prayed that her aunt would show some reserve in her questions and in her remarks, and not say anything dreadful.

Maud opened the door. Her knees were a little shaky as she walked into the room; she was painfully conscious that her face was flushed; her hands felt icy cold. Now the ordeal had to be gone through. Lady Dorothy had left the writing-table; she was now seated by the fire with the *Morning Post* spread upon her knee. Upon a hassock beside her, and opposite to the fire, lay the Pekinese in real or simulated slumber.



'Maud!' called out Lady Dorothy, without turning her head.

'Yes, Aunt Dorothy,' said Maud faintly.

'Well, my dear, you'll never guess!' she said, still without turning her head.

'Not guess, Aunt Dorothy?' said Maud. 'Perhaps—'

'Well, I'm going to keep him!'

'Keep him!' repeated Maud, confused for the flash of a moment.

'He can never take the place of my darling, but as Stella has paid for him I scarcely like to refuse him.'

Maud laughed a little huskily.

'He's not bad, is he, Aunt Dorothy?' she said.

'He's too placid,' said Lady Dorothy; 'but in spite of that I think he is intelligent, and we might take him out with us and try him. We can drive to the Park and then just walk him about a little and see how he follows.'

'He must be kept on the leash,' said Maud, 'for a few days.'

'Perhaps it would be safer,' said Lady Dorothy. 'What is his name, Maud?'

Maud had never thought of asking.

'I really don't know,' she said. 'Hadn't you better give him one, and accustom him to it from the very beginning? I suppose it must be something with a Chinese ring about it. I can't think of anything but Souchong and Orange Pekoe!'

For a moment there was a silence in the room, and then Lady Dorothy spoke musingly.

'I shall call him Pic-ca-noo-noo,' she said.

'What does that mean?' asked Maud.

'I don't know,' said Lady Dorothy.

Maud was careful all that morning, and indeed all the rest of the day, to take no notice of the dog, so as to allow him to fall into the habit of considering Lady Dorothy as his sole and particular friend. He fell into the empty niche of Kiddie with remarkable ease, making no objection to sharing Lady Dorothy's siesta after lunch. He curled himself up before the fire, as if he had always acted as her companion on these occasions.

Maud had an interview with Jackson before the tea was brought into the drawing-room.

'Jackson!' she said, 'don't bring up Kiddie's tea-cup; Pic-ca-noo-noo can drink out of an ordinary cup.'

'The ordinary cups aren't shallow enough, Miss,' said Jackson, with a weary loathing of the name Pic-ca-noo-noo.



'Never mind. Let her ladyship settle the matter herself. You know, Jackson, you'll get quite reconciled to Pic-ca-noo-noo,' said Maud, pronouncing the name very emphatically. 'He's an immense moral improvement on poor Kiddie. You'll get to love Pic-ca-noo-noo, Jackson.'

Jackson bridled at the word 'love.' 'I'm sure I hope he'll continue to be an improvement, Miss,' was all he would admit, and he did so gloomily.

'Well!' said Lady Dorothy, during the quiet evening as they sat by the fire. Maud was reading a book and Lady Dorothy pretending to sew, but really examining the new pet on her lap. 'Well, we must get a special cup to-morrow, Maud, and by the way Stella must be thanked. I think I'll just go and write her a line. After all, it was so kindly meant, though of course Stella knows quite well that nothing can really take the place of my poor darling.'

Lady Dorothy felt that fidelity to the past required her to repeat this formula to other people.

'No other dog could replace Kiddie,' said Maud enigmatically.

'What do you say?' asked her aunt Dorothy a little sharply as she crossed the room.

'I said, Aunt Dorothy, that no other dog could replace Kiddie. You know what the poet says?

"Space is ample, east and west,  
But two cannot go abreast."

'Oh, you and your poets!' grunted Lady Dorothy, and she walked off, but she had Pic-ca-noo-noo on her arm. The last post had just come in and there was no letter from Fitzherbert. Maud went upstairs to her room. In a drawer lay a letter to Fitzherbert already written and stamped, and addressed to him at his London address, but the envelope was not sealed. Maud pulled the paper out and read it:

'DEAR FATHER FITZHERBERT,—I see in the papers that he is going to be removed to Orpenden. Your silence makes me afraid that this report is not correct, or that it does not mean a real recovery.

'Yours sincerely,  
'MAUD MONCKTON.'

There was nothing that she intended to add to this brief letter. It expressed all that she wanted to express. She put the paper back into its envelope and sealed it. Surely it would bring an answer. Then she went down to the drawing-room again and sat pretending



to read, but really listening for Jackson's entrance. Fitzherbert would get the letter by the first post to-morrow, and a reply might come before the evening.

And so Maud waited with great patience till the following evening, but the post brought no answer. The next day passed slowly away and still no answer came, and the next after that! If only she had not 'promised' to do nothing, she could have sent a formal request for news to the housekeeper at Orpenden.

It was on the third evening after she had sent her last letter that she began to be seriously alarmed at Fitzherbert's persistent silence.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT has a dim religious light, the mysteries of Gothic arch and groined roof, the glimmer of lights, the ascending cloud of incense, the swift and subtle music, the subdued voices, and the prostrate worshippers—what has all this to do with the problem of human life?

In old days Maud would have answered this question without hesitation; she would have answered that all this has very little to do with the problem of human life.

It certainly has very little significance to the harried speculator of the Stock Exchange, whose breathless scramble for 'more money' is the chief contribution he offers to the solution of the human problem.

It is certainly of little significance to those 'men and women of the world' who are occupied in swelling the number of their pleasures as their contribution to the human problem.

To all who feel confident that because there is neither hell nor heaven there is therefore no need for religion, it has as much and no more significance than has a season ticket to an exhibition that is now closed.

To Lady Dorothy it had a significance vaguely connected with safety in the next world, but this significance was only apparent on Sunday mornings at eleven o'clock, an hour that lay conveniently between breakfast and lunch.

On other days and at other hours she was shrewdly suspicious of churches, of religious ceremonials, even of private meditation, because time that ought to be 'employed' in the society of Noonoo and of afternoon callers ought not to be 'wasted' on devotional



exercises. In short, she was doubtful whether any ecclesiastical barrier ought to be raised between herself and the Eternal Source of Light except on Sunday at morning service (with the Litany) at a moderately Evangelical place of worship. Fortunately for Maud, Lady Dorothy was not one of those elderly ladies who are possessed by a sinister activity or else a passion for ceaseless desultory conversation. Unlike many of her sex, she allowed her companion to read, and she was at the present moment so much absorbed in her efforts to make Noonoo behave badly and thereby acquire a rich, free personality, that Maud found opportunities of slinking out of the house, full of a secret shame at doing something unaccustomed. There, in the dim aisle of a neighbouring church, she could be alone and give herself up to the task of searching within her own soul for that God for whom she longed, the God of Ursula and of Fitzherbert. And was the search hopeless? She hoped as a wrecked sailor hopes for a passing ship.

How immeasurably far from us are ultimate things! We creep forward slowly in our spiritual evolution as we do in every field of thought. How many centuries did it take us to rise from the confident propitiation of strange stocks and stones to the height of that despairing cry of St. Augustine: that when man realises that he cannot apprehend God, then he apprehends Him best. Alas! we are at the mercy of our sensations, our perceptions, our ideas; they are the source of all our error and the only criterion we have of truth.

Meanwhile the days went by heavily for Maud, for no answer had as yet come from Fitzherbert. She was almost at the end of her patience when at last a letter arrived at lunch-time. She saw the handwriting at once, and allowed the letter to remain unopened until Lady Dorothy went upstairs for her usual afternoon slumber. Then Maud went into the drawing-room, pulled a chair near to the fire, and sat down deliberately to open her letter. She meant to read its contents, whatever they might be, with absolute calm. The letter consisted of a page of Fitzherbert's small, neat writing:—

‘DEAR MISS MONCKTON,—There is no further need for you to be anxious about the health of Major Kames’—(here Maud drew a very long breath, a rather palpitating breath, notwithstanding her intention of being calm). ‘He has practically recovered from the injuries to his spine; they proved to be much slighter than was at first thought.



'He has also recovered from the shock, but I am sorry to say that the doctors have now discovered, what had escaped their notice before, owing to the difficulty of examining him, some sort of injury to the right leg that cannot be remedied without incurring risks that they are not prepared to advise. Major Kames may always be a little lame: that is, it is probable that he may not be able to walk again without the aid of a stick. When he first recovered consciousness after his accident and was told that he might be disabled for some weeks, he sent a message to his Committee offering to resign his seat, but his resignation was refused. Meanwhile a pair has been found for him, and the doctors hope that his lameness will be slight enough to allow of his taking up his Parliamentary duties shortly.

'Believe me, your sincere friend,

'JAMES FITZHERBERT.'

Maud leaned back in her chair, the letter lying on her knees. One sentence stood out clearly from the rest: 'Major Kames may not be able to walk again without the aid of a stick.'

Lionel Kames would never be able to hunt again. He would never be seen again striding loosely along the Parade at Brighton with his slight slouch; he would never be able to run easily up those half-dozen great shallow steps at Orpenden House.

Even if he were ever again to come to No. 2 Brown Street, he would have to mount these stairs to the drawing-room slowly, holding on to the balusters with his left hand, and using his stick with his right.

Maud found herself picturing Kames walking to the foot of the stairs, and beginning to mount them. In imagination she walked in front of him, looking back at his face as he came up one step at a time slowly. She could see his face, looking as it did that night after they had come back from the theatre; she could see his lips move, and hear him say words that had since haunted her persistently:

'If we knew ourselves as we really are we should die of laughing—or go mad.'

So much absorbed was she in her thoughts that she did not notice steps outside the drawing-room door, nor did she hear the door open. The sound of Jackson's voice broke in upon her harshly and unexpectedly.

'Dr. Broughton!'

Maud jumped up from her chair. Broughton was alone.



'You were asleep?' he questioned. 'I am sorry I disturbed you.'

'I wasn't asleep,' said Maud, clasping her letter and trying to look unconcerned. 'I was—only thinking.'

'Thinking hard?' said her brother-in-law. Had she been thinking of Ursula?

Maud reseated herself and asked if Stella was well.

'Perfectly well,' said Broughton, looking about the room as if to seek for a chair which he couldn't find. Then he suddenly left off looking and took a chair quite near to Maud and sat down on it.

'You and Stella are coming in to dinner to-morrow as usual of course,' said Maud, now becoming conscious that her brother-in-law was not in his usual spirits. She guessed that his visit was purposely early and that he had come to speak about something—something troublesome—to judge by the look in his eyes as he turned them towards her.

Was it about domestic difficulties? Maud had never examined Stella's bills, nor looked over her housekeeping accounts—such as they were—nor had she gone into the question of meals that would be suitable for an overworked husband. The prospect of having one hundred and fifty pounds a year in addition to their present income had banished from Stella's mind all misgivings as to the future.

She felt sure that she would now have plenty of money for everything—more than enough, considering her really very economical management. There was therefore no need for Maud to interfere; in fact Stella had mentioned her doubts whether, after all, any one woman can realise the domestic problem of any other woman, and that therefore the most sensible course for Maud to take was to take no course at all, and to retire modestly from any attempt to muddle things.

Maud, thus admonished, had not mentioned the subject again.

Had George come to re-open the subject?

'You and Stella are not golfing this afternoon?' asked Maud. Somehow the word 'Stella' would come into every sentence she uttered. 'Ought you to lose Saturday afternoon, George?'

'I can't always manage it,' he replied. 'I've promised to take Stella to see this new piece at the Court this evening, and I can't manage that—and golf—and the train there and back—and my morning's work at the Laboratory.'



Maud saw how tired he looked already, with the work of the week behind him.

'Oh,' she said, in a doubtful tone.

'And if we move, golf will be a little less accessible than it is now,' and he laughed slightly.

So this was what he had come to speak about? Stella wanted to move? She wanted a larger flat in a more central position?

'Stella wants to move?' suggested Maud.

'She doesn't like Hampstead,' said Broughton.

'But I thought you went there because of your health,' said Maud.

'Yes,' said Broughton. 'But I am quite well.'

Now that he was no longer flushed by his brisk walk in the cold air, the tired look under his eyes came out prominently and the leanness of his jaw was marked. He was still handsome and distinguished, but his youth had gone: what a contrast he and his wife were! She blooming like a rose, unaware of responsibility, undertaking nothing that required concentration of mind or which entailed fatigue. He already beginning to be seared by the strain of work and anxious thoughts about the present and the future.

'Do you want to move?' asked Maud point-blank.

Broughton hesitated for a moment.

'I am not keen about it; it's different for me. I don't mind our sitting-room being small, or the fact that we are not near anybody.'

Maud's eyes dropped.

'The fact is, Maud,' said Broughton, his voice a little askew, 'I believe that Stella would be willing to stay where we are if she had more outlet for her energies.' Here he gazed at Maud with wide-open eyes. 'Our sitting-room is too small, Stella can't sing in it, and there is no room for an audience. From her point of view the room is absurd.'

Maud met his eyes as she sat thinking deeply.

'You see,' continued Broughton, 'it's rather hard on Stella. She has given up a career for my sake, and I naturally want her to suffer as little as possible.'

'Given up a career?' repeated Maud.

'A career of music,' he said quietly. 'A career in which she would have been able to distinguish herself, express her own genius, and realise her true self. Now she is like a caged bird, unable to spread its wings and fly.'



Stella's true self expressed in her own genius! Maud was filled with amazement! Possibly Stella might have got a post as chorus girl on account of her great good looks, but that was more a matrimonial career than a career in art. George Broughton's generous sympathy and reverence for his wife was very beautiful, or, thought Maud, was he trying hard to keep up an illusion about her that had already begun to fade? Had he discovered that the enchanted palace, with its distant glint of gold, on nearer survey, was only the glitter of sunrise upon the windows of a common house? Was he determined to be loyal to his romance in spite of this discovery?

'The difficulty of course is,' continued Broughton, leaning back in his chair and crossing his knees with studied quiet, 'that we simply can't afford a more expensive flat.'

The 'rights' of those who feel themselves born to delight humanity are now restricted by the severe conditions of the financial world, by the patience or lack of it in the public. But under a system of socialism in the future each individual will, no doubt, claim from the State an education suitable to his or her native talent. May there not be a heavy task, requiring a superhuman insight and a stern moral courage, awaiting those members of the bureaucracy whose duty it will be to judge, from an amazing crowd of aspirants, the few who are likely to acquire a mastery of the Arts?

Maud pondered for a moment over Broughton's words, then a bright idea came to her.

'Do you think,' said Maud, 'that if Aunt Dorothy could be induced to give parties, and let Stella sing at them, Stella would be contented to remain where she is?'

Broughton uncrossed his legs and leaned forward rather eagerly.

'I think she would,' he said, 'I think it possible.' In fact this was what he had already planned in his mind, as a way out of the dilemma.

'Then I must try and persuade Aunt Dorothy,' said Maud.

Broughton sat staring at Maud very much as a patient might at a trusted doctor who has just described a remedy.

'Do you think you could?' he said. 'You see, Maud, the fact is money difficulties are the very deuce!'

'I know they are,' said Maud. 'I've had some experience of them.'

'I believe I could do really good work,' said Broughton, 'if



I could only have my mind free from anxiety.' He had not intended to say this; the words had sprung to his lips almost automatically, moved by Maud's rapid response to his thoughts.

A slight colour came into his face. 'Every man, when he marries,' he went on, trying to cover his mistake rapidly, 'has to face the fact that he is no longer his own master.' He said 'every man' with great emphasis. 'It is just the same for women; they have to give up much that is precious to them when they marry. They can't do just what they want to do.'

Maud flushed a little. 'Can't do just what they want to?' she said, and she began folding up the letter that was still clasped in her hands, and put it away in its envelope. There was something a little fierce in her voice, which struck Broughton.

'We can always do just what we *really* can do,' she added enigmatically. Then she noticed that Broughton's hand wandered to his chin, and his eyes sought the ground rather gloomily, and she felt a pang of regret at her words. They had been uttered with a certain self-satisfaction and regardlessness of him. His burden would be less easy to bear if he came to believe that it was an unnecessary burden.

'I feel sure,' she said hastily, 'that something could be done for Stella. Now that Kiddie has gone, and Aunt Dorothy is safely provided with a dog that doesn't bark—which was Stella's doing—I don't see why we shouldn't entertain a little more in a modest way. Can you keep Stella from taking any step for a fortnight or so? That will give me time. I will find some good opportunity of discussing the subject with her.'

Maud was keenly anxious to help him; she showed it in her voice and manner, and he was moved to speak his gratitude.

When he said 'Good-bye,' he stood holding her hand for a moment and looking as if he wanted to say something more. All this time, ever since he had first met her, Maud had never once mentioned Kames' name to him. He had caught a momentary glimpse of the little drama, but it was at the period in his own life when he was absorbed by the romance and uniqueness of his own love affair. Since then he had had time to think of Maud, of Kames, and of Kames' relations with Ursula; indeed, Stella had lately talked about them with a persistence that had been rather fatiguing. Was this sympathetic, sensible girl, whose hand he was holding, the same girl who accepted and then jilted Kames in cold blood? As Broughton looked down at her, he decided in his own



mind that, whatever had happened, it could not have been all her fault. Anyhow, there was nothing that he had a right to say even by way of sympathy. So he merely pressed her hand closely and went away.

It was a little irritating to him, on his return home, to hear from Stella that she had made up her mind to 'find out' whether Lady Dorothy was still being 'kept in the dark' about Major Kames.

'Don't interfere, Stella,' he said, gently but firmly. 'Let Maud manage her own affairs.'

He could not have chosen words which would have aroused Stella's moral disapproval more keenly.

'It's not that I want to interfere, as you so politely put it,' she said, 'but I have what you haven't, my dear boy—some interest in other people's lives; and as to it's being Maud's affair, it isn't her affair at all. Major Kames' accident is public property, and it would be only just to him and to the memory of dear Ursula to let Aunt Dorothy know that Major Kames was kind to her when she was dying. So I mean to tell Aunt Dorothy to-morrow.'

Broughton looked at his wife. They were sitting in their tiny drawing-room. The piano was open and the music scattered about. Stella's feet were upon the fender; the large coffee stain on the carpet was conspicuous at her side. In view of their going to the theatre that evening George was to be treated at seven o'clock to what Stella called a 'scramble meal,' consisting of tea and indigestible compositions bought at a shop. She was full of contentment at the prospect. Her earrings were swinging, and her eyes brilliant. She was not merely happy in the anticipation of an exciting evening, she was also glowing with a sense of importance, duty to be fulfilled on the following day (Sunday), when they went to dine as usual at No. 2 Brown Street.

'I shall tell Aunt Dorothy to-morrow, George,' she said. 'I really shall, dear,' she said, laughing with renewed good temper.

*(To be continued.)*



### BIRDS AND THE BATTLEFIELDS.

Of all the letters so anxiously expected at home from brave men fighting at the front, it is likely that none are awaited with anxiety more keen, or received with greater pleasure, than those of the middies in our guarding ships. They are so young, with so little a corner of life's veil uplifted for them, to be engaged in such deadly peril. From them we never hear the note of apprehension sounded in those letters. Always they write full of hope for a fight, full of zeal, and often with much humorous comment on their immediate surroundings, or on the general situation. There must be long spells of monotony dividing brief but glorious moments of excitement only too vivid, and from one or two of the letters that I have been lucky enough to see, it is evident that the visit of land birds in numbers to some of the ships has been an occasion of great interest to the hosts of the winged wanderers.

'It's awfully funny,' wrote one, 'what a lot of land birds there have been on board. They are not sea birds, like gulls and birds with webbed feet, but just the ordinary sorts of birds that you see in the garden. I cannot think what they can have been doing there unless they had been scared off the land by the firing.'

Another writes :

'No end of little birds have been all about the ship to-day : they look rather out of place, but they seem very tame—chaffinches, wrens—no end of them, and a lot of other sorts. I'm not allowed to say where we are—Lat. or Long. or anything of that sort—but it is right out at sea, and the funny thing is that the birds seem to have come not from the direction of any land, or any near land at all. They must have come a long way. I suppose they are migrating, but I did not know that wrens did migrate.'

The last writer is evidently something more of an ornithologist than the former. Doubtless he has hit on the right solution of the appearance of those land birds far from their haunts : they are on migration. The suggestion, however, of the former and less experienced student of birds is not so wild as it may seem—that these wanderers were sent across the sea by the firing. It is nearly sure that this was not their particular case, but it is almost as sure, according to observations of ornithologists in Kent and other eastern and south-eastern counties of England at the time of the Franco-German War of 1870, that a large number of Continental



birds did come at that date to this corner of England. It seems that they were principally birds of prey—large hawks, such as the buzzard—but very likely this may have been only an illusion, due to the fact that birds of this species would be noticed more often and recognised more easily than smaller birds, such as finches and the like. It has been observed that the increase of the hawfinch in England seems to date from about this time, an increase which has been progressive ever since, and it has been suggested that the firing and all the uproar, which almost certainly were the causes of the birds of prey leaving their usual haunts and crossing the Channel, give the explanation of a considerable pilgrimage of the hawfinch—always a shy and evasive bird. So the speculation of the middy first quoted, that the birds coming to the ships were frightened away from the land by the fearsome cannonading, is not by any means altogether without reason, though it is most improbable that it was the true cause of the appearance of these particular birds.

That true cause is the marvellous migration instinct which has claimed the wonder and admiration of man in all ages, when he has turned his thoughts to give any consideration to the ways of his fellow pilgrims in a lower rank of the evolutionary scheme. 'Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming.' This from Jeremiah, and several other references in Scripture refer to the migration. The comings and goings of the crane are particularly observed by Homer; and, naturally, Aristotle, taking all knowledge for his province, discussed and studied the birds and their movements. Among much wisdom he mingled certain fantasies, such as the hibernation theory, which held its place as an article of faith for many centuries, and even the transmutation of species. Seeing that certain of the mammals pass the cold weather in a state of trance, it would seem no outrage on the laws of Nature were birds to do so likewise. We know, however, as a fact, that they do not. Aristotle, though he has to take responsibility for much, is to be acquitted of any share in the strange theory of the subaqueous hibernation of swallows, which was an article of his faith for Gilbert White's friend, the Hon. Daines Barrington, and was discussed with the gravity due to a perfectly possible hypothesis by the great naturalist of Selborne himself. Some of the natural history works of the Middle Ages have delightful pictures of birds, in a hibernation trance, together with fishes, being drawn from the sea in nets. A very credible



eye-witness from Russia told Mr. Pepys all about it, as you may read in the great gossip's diary.

Our middies, we may believe, have seen and will continue to see marvellous things, but we do not hear of their observing any such occurrence as this. On the other hand, cruising as we suppose them to in the North Sea and around the north coast of Scotland right up to the Faroe Islands, and farther west again along the west coasts of Scotland and Ireland, they have been everywhere in the full current of the migration stream. When men of trained observation, like Aristotle, began to consider the movements of the birds, it was perceived in a general way that they went south on the approach of cold weather and came north again as it grew genial in the spring. That was the old naturalist's account of the matter; and it is an account that holds good enough for the Northern Hemisphere, but it is evident that it did not quite reach the meaning of those movements. It assumed the cold to be a sufficient and immediate explanation, whereas we know that it is only indirectly the cause. We have realised that there are certain seasons of the year, say from November to April, in the Northern Hemisphere when all the northern portion of that hemisphere is quite unsuited for the residence of birds that require insect food. On the other hand, just because it is virtually without insect life in the winter, and because the winter is very prolonged, its insect life as well as its floral life is extraordinarily rich in summer. The flowers and insects have to get through, in course of a few weeks, that business of first importance in Nature's scheme, the reproduction of their kind, which in the temperate belt may be spread out far longer. Thus it is that we have the marvellous exuberance of the Siberian spring, to which all who have seen it bear emphatic testimony. If all the birds endeavoured to do all their domestic work and bring up their families in that belt around the tropics where, and where alone, a good many of the strictly insect-eating kinds are able to find food to maintain life during our winter months, it is obvious and certain that a great many little callow mouths would gape in the nests in vain, because there would not be enough insects within the hunting range of their parents to fill them all. Doubtless it is a certain recognition of this fact that has been the chief influence in forcing the birds to acquire the habit of migrating from the central belt of the earth towards its poles for their nursery work, arriving at their Arctic or Antarctic quarters, as the case may be, just at the moment when the populous short spring and summer of these



regions are at their commencement. Then, when this short spell of eager life is over, food supplies of the insect-eating birds begin to fail towards the poles, and the birds begin their journey back again towards the centre, and in their course traverse those tracts of sea where our middies have noticed them. One of the writers notes that the birds seemed to come from the direction farthest from land, and that, though evidently not what he would have expected, is exactly what the facts of the case as known to the ornithologist would lead him to look for. The birds would be coming southwards and south-westwards from Scandinavia. Mr. Eagle Clarke, who is our latest and 'up-to-date' authority on this subject, found the Fair Island a fine centre for his migration studies. The stream of birds going southwards impinges on the north coast of Scotland, and some of its pilgrims go down along our east and others by way of the west coast. On their route they nearly always follow the coast-line if they are on passage—that is to say if they are birds which do not make a winter residence with us, but are on their way farther south, for our islands are visited by pilgrims who are journeying to very different bournes. Both of the spring and of the autumn migrants, some come to stay, others only use our islands as a man may take his ease at his inn. On the autumnal journey they will sometimes tarry at our hostelry, for then they are moving leisurely. There is no pressing hurry, so long as the provisions are good. On the reverse course, in spring, they do not dally. The strongest impulse in their nature is urging them to be ever moving till they come to the scene of their infancy, where they will, in their turn, bring up a family of infants of their own. This is a business which brooks no delay.

I think we may take it that it was a detachment of the birds thus coming down from the Arctic border that our middies saw on board their ships. This north to south (roughly thus indicating the compass points) line of flight is not the only one which bird pilgrims to our shores follow at this time. There is also a tolerably direct east to west and west to east flight of immigrant and emigrant birds across the North Sea and the Channel, of which the majority of the westward and immigrant travellers strike Great Britain near the mouth of the Thames. They have a liking for following river ways, and pursue their course along the Thames valley into the heart of England, branching off, here and there, by the ways of its tributaries. That is their main course of travel, though portions of the incoming crowds break off north and south



along the coast from the Thames estuary and work inland by other river courses. And not only do they pursue the guiding lines of the rivers on arrival, but it is by a like guidance that they have steered their way over Continental Europe. These birds thus coming to us are the Central Europe birds, and to arrive on the Continental west coast they generally follow the course of such rivers as the Rhine, Scheldt, and Maas. You may see what, or partly what, that must mean to them in the present dreadful circumstances. The paths which they and their forbears have been accustomed for generations to traverse, and have always, with the exception of the autumn and spring of the Franco-German War of 1870, found paths of peace, are converted into an inferno of war turmoil. We do not know to what extent their migration flight has been affected, but it is difficult to think that it will not have been affected in some degree. There is no reason why our middies should not find their ships visited by migrants on these lines, crossing from the mouths of the Rhine and Scheldt towards the Thames, if they were in that southern portion of the North Sea; but, as a matter of fact, we have some little evidence, in the species of birds of which they write, that this was not the locality of their vessels when the wanderers boarded them. They write of the chaffinches and the wrens. The birds which they would have seen, had they been in the southern area of the North Sea, would not consist at all largely of the latter species. They would be, as we have said, of the Central European kinds—mainly hoodie crows, rooks, skylarks, starlings, and chaffinches. The chaffinch would be a very probable, almost a certain, visitor, though the ornithologists class him as a typically 'Northern Continental' species rather than of the Central Europe tribes. But the wren does not seem to take this line, or not to have been noticed travelling by it in any numbers, although with the golden-crested wren it is a favourite route. The wren, our sombre-hued though cheeky little brown friend, without the gay golden crown, is in the 'Northern Continental' list, and we may take it, on his witness alone, that probably it was as they patrolled the more northerly North Sea, or the ocean even more towards the west, that these little travellers came on board the ships. It is, of course, a perpetual astonishment to us that birds so tiny and, apparently, of such feeble wing power, should make these long over-sea migrations; but it is an astonishment that is renewed with unfailing regularity each spring and autumn. Nor is it at all unusual for the travellers to seek rest



by the way on a ship met in the course of their transit. Mr. Eagle Clarke notes that two wrens came aboard one evening about 4 P.M., when he was making observations, and slept in the reef of the sail.

The 'man in the street,' to speak of him as the type of all popular ignorance, is apt to divide the birds of his casual acquaintance by a very simple division into migrants and residents—birds which are with us only part of the year, and those which are with us always. He heads the former category with the cuckoo and the swallow, and there are perhaps not many species that he would be more likely to name as representative of the latter class than these very two observed of the middies—the chaffinches and wrens. The more closely migration is studied, the more complex the problem grows. The cuckoo and swallow may well stand as typical migrants, though the movements of the former are full of interest and mystery. How do the young cuckoos, migrating long after their true parents and unaccompanied by their nurses, find their way unerringly to the south? But, leaving that discussion, which would carry us too far a flight out of our course, we have to note that there are many species, these chaffinches and wrens among them, of which many individuals stay with us all the year round, while many go to and from our islands at spring and autumn under a like impulse to that which inspires the migration of cuckoo and swallow. An even more astonishing thing than this happens, and that is that, at the very same moment at which some of a species are emigrating, others are coming in as immigrants. And as they often use the same lines of flight, and more often still lines which intersect, the observer's task is complicated by the very singular fact that, he may find a stream of birds going north or west towards our islands and, crossing them, a stream of the very same species going in the opposite line. It is obvious what a confusion this is likely to cause in the records, and how careful their compiler needs to be. The task is not quite so difficult where, as is the case with the starlings, for instance, there is a slight but appreciable difference of plumage between birds born in Great Britain and those native to the Continent. Their coming and going streams intersect, and they are of species which appear to be most readily attracted by the glare of the light-ships or houses. Chaffinches also cross in their out-goings and in-comings in a like manner. At the Kentish Knock light-ship, for instance, Mr. Clarke notes that 'on the morning of October 15th it' (that is to say the chaffinch) 'was passing to South-South-West as a British emigrant, and to the



West as an immigrant.' I am not aware that there is any difference that can be detected between chaffinches that are native here and those that are born and bred on the Continent.

Truly the conditions under which the birds have been essaying their great autumnal movements to and fro these islands must have been very strange to them this year. It is better to write *essaying*, for it is hardly to be thought that they can always have succeeded in its accomplishment. It is not only that all the din of furious war has been raging night and day along the very course of one of their most favourite passage routes. Though that is, perhaps, for us the most obvious feature, it is likely that they find a greater strangeness and alteration still when they quit the land for their across-sea flight. That flight, it should be noticed, is a nocturnal transit. It is manifestly necessary, if we consider the conditions, that it should be so. The bird armies, like the human, require to be fed, and birds, as a rule (the predatory kinds are an exception), cannot easily go long between meals. The vast majority are the diurnal birds: they have to do their foraging by daylight. See, then, what it would mean were they to traverse the sea in the daytime. They would have had but a hurried meal—like a breakfast which we snatch in haste before catching an early train—previous to starting; throughout the journey they would find no restaurants at which to refresh themselves, for the 'unharvested sea' affords neither vegetable nor insect food; and, finally, they would arrive on the farther shore, if at all, when night was falling, so that they would have to wait yet another twelve hours or more, supposing the month to be November, before the light of returning day permitted them to go about the long-delayed business of finding their next meal. It would mean a thirty-six hours' fast, in round figures, and that, added to the journey's fatigue, would mean death to a good round number of the fasting pilgrims. Nature has taught them a better wisdom. Travelling, as they do, by night, they would have a good day's food inside them, and on arrival at the farther shore would meet a new day just beginning, wherein they might pick such seeds and insects as they needed before composing themselves to sleep off the weariness of the night's travel. The fasting period would be but twelve hours, as against the thirty-six which a diurnal journey would be likely to impose.

For the best of reasons, therefore, they go by night. It used generally to be assumed that they travelled at an immense height. They were seen by Herr Gatke at Heligoland coming straight down as



if descending from the very heavens ; and a like account of their perpendicular descent has been given by other bird watchers. Whence, apparently, it has been deduced that the normal elevation of their migration flight is very great. But really it would not need that they should be flying immensely high for their settling on the ground to give this impression to an onlooker ; and on the other hand Mr. Clarke and others who have observed the migrating birds from lighthouses and ships have seen them going close over the surface of the water, just as we see them at times passing, low-flying, over the ground. Some species, no doubt, habitually fly much higher than others, whether in their great statutory journeys or merely when moving from one feeding-ground to another. Geese, for all their size, are often so high that they cannot be seen, though their ' honking ' cry may be heard.

But whether high or low, and however they may be directed in those over-sea passages (for this again is one of the mysteries of this subject so fraught with mystery, though one which would lead us too far from the course to follow here), whether coming hither or going away from us, it is likely that the older birds, those that ' have been there before,' must have become accustomed to certain appearances of the coast, such as the lights of the coastward towns and of the light-ships. They will have grown used to passing, without alarm, the lights of ships going on their course of riding quietly at their anchorage. But what must they have found, immensely to their astonishment, this year ? The whole arch of heaven swept unceasingly by the immense searchlights projected from those ships on which our correspondents did the diverse works of mid-shipmen. It is difficult to imagine a more complete change in the conditions through which they had to make good, if so be they might, their journey. The condition normal to them was one of a placid heaven punctuated here and there with occasional points of light : that they have lately found exchanged for a firmament confused with what surely must have been for them a most bewildering glare of criss-cross beams of a volume and a brilliance hitherto unknown by them. It is hardly to be expected but that a very large number of them must have failed to find their way. They cannot have been wholly unaffected by circumstances so outrageously strange.

The birds are very careful choosers of their nights for sea-transit. It has been observed that migration is very rare with a south-east wind ; but this is not because that trend of wind is unfavourable to



flight, but only because it is a wind associated with foul weather. The travellers like anti-cyclonic conditions, and if they can be fairly assured of a clear sky and an absence of high wind, they will essay the journey as soon as the natural instinct spurs them to it. If conditions are not in favour, they will delay the flight for weeks, with the result that, when the promising night arrives, they take advantage of it to come over in their millions. But it will happen, in the mutability of terrestrial moods of weather, that, starting on a fine night, they may find it misty as they come over the sea—perhaps with a fine drizzle—and it is on such a night as this, when the great lanterns are illuminating each separate particle of rain, and there is a contrasted darkness round and about those planes of light, that the birds are most attracted and distracted and beat against the glass, like moths about an electric globe, until they fall exhausted and die in the sea.

It is, of course, quite impossible for us to estimate or even to conjecture the misleading influences on the travelling birds of these beams of radiating light sent up to high heaven by warring man. That multitudes must have been thus misled there can be no doubt, but I have not yet personally noticed, nor heard from anyone else a report of, any great difference in the distribution of our birds this winter. Of course, not all the birds which touch our islands during their migration spend either winter or summer with us: that is yet another phase of the migration movements that is outside the philosophy of the 'man in the street.' A vast number are 'on passage' only—that is to say, are taking the shores of our islands as guides to their flight and making brief rests on the way. On a first glance we might be inclined to think that the birds which come to us on their way north, having the farthest to go, would be likely to arrive sooner than those which mean to stay with us. The truth is just the reverse, and a moment's consideration shows that for the welfare of these wing-borne pilgrims it is necessary that it should be so. In northern regions the spring is later in arrival than with us who live, not only farther south, but in the mid-current of the warm Gulf Stream. Inherited experience has evidently taught those nesters in the north that it is no wise bird who will hurry thither while all is still frozen and there is no life of the flowers nor of the flying or creeping insect. If they arrived thus prematurely they would starve to death: probably many forbears of their kind actually have suffered this hard fate, and thus by much sacrifice have transmitted to their posterity the valuable and necessary



instinct to delay their migration to the north perhaps weeks later than the date at which others of the same species will have begun their nesting here. The robin is one of the earliest nesters in this country ; yet, on the passage north, we find some of his kind, whose nesting-places are near the Arctic zone, sometimes making their coastwise journey as late as the latter end of May.

We are apt to think of these instinctive habits as fixed so deeply in the species as to be unalterable, but there are several striking instances to the contrary. The woodcock's is a well-known case in point. It may be noted that there were some very early woodcock immigrants reported and shot this winter. But the point in which this bird has shown a new departure from the formed habit of its kind is in the numbers which now nest with us. A nesting woodcock in these islands was a curiosity a quarter of a century ago. Multitudes are nesting with us now. A change of habit which leads birds not to new nesting haunts but to new feeding-grounds is less remarkable perhaps, and certainly is apt to be less satisfactory to the farmer. For a dozen years or more we have been visited every winter by immense legions of wood-pigeons coming from Continental Europe to feast on our acorns and beech-mast. Our acorn crop of this season is wonderful, both in the quantity of the fruit of the oak and in the size of the individual acorns, so the pigeons may find fat feeding. They are not of that weak-winged kind, like the wrens and finches, that will seek rest on passing ships in their over-sea flight, but it is certain that they must have suffered a fearful perturbation this year in some of their Continental homes.

Ornithologists who knew South Africa before the last Boer War, and have been able to continue their observations since, tell us that it is only now, after all these years, that the birds in that country are beginning to take possession of their old haunts in their former numbers. That, to be sure, was a far more long-drawn-out strife than even the most convinced pessimist thinks it possible for the fearful struggle to be which is now convulsing almost the whole of Europe and much of the world besides ; but in the terror and perpetual firing and smoke cloud and din of war the present struggle far exceeds that other, and the harrying of the birds in the vast areas over which it extends must be in proportion the more severe. A temporary disturbance and change of haunts among certain species we are tolerably sure to see. As I write, the autumnal migration is still in tolerably full stream, and with people's thoughts mainly occupied in one great event of war we arrive at no



conclusions as to the kind or extent of these derangements. That they will be considerable, we cannot doubt. They will be interesting to watch, in course of their accomplishment, and when all this terrible clew of war is definitely wound up it will be of farther interest to see whether the changes which it produces in avian distribution are likely to be permanent, or whether, after the turmoil is over, the birds will quickly return to their old homes and habits and resume, according to the ancient traditions and along the wonted routes, the goings to and fro in spring and autumn.

HORACE HUTCHINSON.



## THE MILK CART

(IN THE MIDLANDS)

*Come up! Are you right there? Aye: gee whoa!  
For 'appen the kitchen clock be slow,  
And it's all three mile as we've got to go,  
Along the lane from Burnaston.*

Behind the yard gate swings and shuts,  
As the old mare, stumbling across the ruts,  
Pulls out, with the yellow lamps alight,  
And into the raw December night,  
Between the hedges, and round the turns.  
Jogs on with her load of banging churns.

For this is the tale and the task of the shire,  
The tale that starts with the cows in the byre,  
And ends down a hundred winding lanes  
With the carts that rattle to catch the trains,  
And leave in the wayside platform's gloom—  
Their tally of churns that clang and boom—  
Gallons and gallons, pouring south,  
Into the great town's thirsty mouth.

*Come up! or we'll miss the seven-five,  
And it's us as keeps the place alive,  
Us and the clatterin' cart we drive,  
Along the lane from Burnaston.*

Surely this earth, where one lives and learns,  
It spins to the sound of the banging churns,  
And all mankind to that clang and boom  
Must tread a measure from cot to tomb.

There is the town with the crowds that wait  
The cart that jolts through the stackyard gate;



The town with its millions who strive and stir  
For their dole of the kind earth's provender,  
From my lady, splendid in lace and silk,  
With the bell she rings for her morning milk,  
To the hungry children, for whom our load,  
Spells life or death in the Mile End road;

And here, at the other end of the chair,  
Is Pegg's old mare in Burnaston lane.

*Come up! They be cleverer far nor we,  
The folk i' the town, but where 'ud they be,  
Where 'ud they be, wi'out you and me,  
Bumpin' along from Burnaston?*

ALFRED COCHRANE.



## THE TOLLHOUSE.

### CHAPTER I.

IN our village the opening of Parliament, even by H.M. the King, usually passed unnoticed. It was one of those events belonging to London, the Empire, possibly the World, but one with which the inhabitants of our village had no personal connection.

In the year 1913, however, on the 10th day of March, this State procession was brought home to each of us, in the closest manner possible, by the visit of our Mrs. Kidston to Westminster.

Mrs. Kidston lived somewhat apart from the village—that is to say, that though in it, she was not of it, for the reason that her house was quite several yards distant from any other house, and it dominated the cross roads for nearly half a mile. In former days its importance as the Tollhouse was defined by the large gates controlling the traffic to and from the nearest town, and now, even without these outward signs, Mrs. Kidston saw to it that its authority was not one whit dimmed so long as she resided under its roof.

Mrs. Kidston was, without a shadow of doubt, 'the lady of the village.' Up at the house there lived the Squire—generally known as Sirenry; and the Squire's wife and family—spoken of respectively as her ladyship, Master George, Miss Mary, and the children-at-the-house. In and out, and round about, lived the Parson and the Parson's wife, the Doctor and the Doctor's wife, and a few other people like myself who lead a peaceful and uneventful existence from the fact that in Mrs. Kidston's eyes we do not count.

On this day afore mentioned, Mrs. Kidston went to London by the early train, with a card in her reticule indicating that her presence was desired at the House of Commons, St. Stephen's entrance, somewhere about the hour of noon. The groom-at-the-house drove Mrs. Kidston to the station, saw her off in safety, and, returning for her later, deposited her on her own doorstep while the daylight still held.

It was impossible for the village to be blind to the fact that great things had happened in London that day, of which Mrs. Kidston alone could speak as she would. There was a triumphant flip



about her skirts as she was set down, her handshake of gratitude to the groom-at-the-house betokened a sudden knowledge we all longed to share, and the newspaper she carried—an evening newspaper—filled us each with a covetous desire.

We tried to wait. Our manners strove with our curiosity, but could not prevail; and one by one we called at Mrs. Kidston's just to inquire how she had borne the journey and a long day in town.

She welcomed us all in, proud of the position that circumstances had given her, and, forthwith, showing no sign of fatigue, she told us all we wished to know.

She had been met at the station by Miss Mary, who called out 'Hullo, Nankins!' on the platform, and made many people turn round to look at her; then she was put in a taxi-cab in charge of the children-from-the-house and driven to Parliament. There were flags flying and bands playing, bells pealing and cannon roaring, crowds upon crowds lined the roadway which was sanded a beautiful colour for the King's procession.

Mrs. Kidston stood on a portion of the kerb apparently set apart for her and her only; the children stood on either side until the approach of the Ambassadors' carriages. Then they slipped in between two stalwart soldiers who allowed them this chance of a better view.

'And did you see the King and Queen, Mrs. Kidston?'

'To be sure I did! but anyone can see the King and Queen in London a most any day. What I saw'—here Mrs. Kidston gave a comprehensive glance round the room to include us all. 'What happened this time, and what I saw with my own two eyes, was the new German Ambassador being dragged through the streets of London by the police!'

Mrs. Kidston nodded her head to emphasise the truth of her story, and in the pause following her words we gasped, as was expected of us, with amazement.

'Through the streets, Mrs. Kidston?'

'Through the streets of London, down—Whitehall, I think they called that sandy bit—past Westminster Abbey, him and his Princess! He's a Prince, I believe, and his name is Lick something.'

'But why, Mrs. Kidston?' In imagination most of us at that moment saw their Excellencies handcuffed, and struggling on the pavement protected only from a yelling mob by the arm of



the law. Mrs. Kidston had not said this in so many words, but her manner led us to this conviction. We asked quickly, 'What had they done?'

'They hadn't done nothing—'twas their horses! Made in Germany, I suppose, and didn't like the English guns. Took fright, they did, in the Mall, and the coachman he couldn't drive them, and they had to be got out of the way before their Majesties came; so they was unharnessed, and a lot of policemen took hold of that great coach, and they pulled and they pushed and they shoved to get the German Ambassador up to his place in time.'

'Did they do it?' we breathed anxiously.

'They did; but only just. Our children got a beautiful view, standing there between the Grenadiers, right in front they were, and saw the cream-coloured horses and the liveries of those walking grooms, and the King and Queen looking for all the world like a fairy-story in a glass coach. Oh, it was lovely! They stopped just opposite us, they did, when the road was blocked by the Germans—long enough for the Queen to turn pale and shudder. I could see that as plain as plain; then when the Germans were moved on, the King he spoke to her very quiet-like, and she bowed to me and the children as if we were friends.'

'Well, Mrs. Kidston, you were lucky!'

'Yes, I'll allow I was,' she said with some condescension, unfolding the newspaper. 'There's something about it here, if you like to read, but of course it doesn't tell what I can tell, and you can believe if you like. It's a omen! that's what it is I've seen this day; you mark my words—a omen! All this talk about war with Germany, I don't believe that there Emperor would ever be so silly, not after he knows what's happened to-day. His Ambassador's horses frightened by the English cheering and the English guns! What's that but a omen? His Ambassador dragged through an English crowd by London police, all very friendly and laughing in peace time, but in time of war—Do you think he'll risk it? After this?—Well, if he does—' Mrs. Kidston flung back her bonnet-strings and folded her arms over her waist, 'I for one shall have no fear—not after what I've seen to-day.'

The light of divination shone in Mrs. Kidston's eyes as we thanked her and wished her good night.



## CHAPTER II.

IN July 1914, we were all expecting the family to come back home from London and keep us lively through the summer. According to the notices on the side wall of the Tollhouse there was to be the cricket-matches and a garden party, and the school treat, and a Mothers' Union Meeting with the Bishop in the chair, and a Primrose League fête, and a Church of England Men's gathering, —all arranged for August up at the house.

Of course we knew the country was in a state of agitation over the Irish Home Rule affair, and people said we were on the brink of civil war; we hoped it was not true, and trusted it would not upset all our summer plans.

The family came down according to their rank: first the servants, then the children; then her ladyship and Miss Mary and Master George; followed the next day, when all was quite as it should be at the house, by Sirenry and an M.P., who was to speak to us on the Saturday and tell us all the secrets of the Government.

I don't know how it got about, but before the meeting in the park we all knew Miss Mary had a lover. Mrs. Kidston never said a word; but the second housemaid was a long time calling at the Tollhouse one evening before dark, and the next day Mrs. Kidston went up to the house in her black cashmere, and was there ever so long. We knew the black cashmere generally meant a visit to the schoolroom; but once there, she might of course dally a bit in the housekeeper's room, or the nursery, or even be sent for to her ladyship's boudoir; any way, we learnt nothing from her on her return, but were rewarded the very next day by seeing Miss Mary set down at the door by the motor that went to fetch Sirenry.

While Miss Mary was there, the door of the Tollhouse was shut; this never happened for anyone in the village. What we had to say to Mrs. Kidston was public property; the door was only shut for a member of the family.

We watched for more than an hour; the motor came back, called at the Tollhouse, and then went on; we began to think Miss Mary must have slipped out of the window at the back, as she often did when a child, and as Master George does to this day; so we decided to take a stroll as far as the park gates and see what we could see. Fortune was on our side; as we passed the Tollhouse, the door opened and Miss Mary came out.



Her face was red, and her eyes were very bright. Mrs. Kidston's voice was heard saying 'It'll all come right, dearie; don't you fret your pretty face. The good God can't abear to see you spoil your looks, let alone another man.'

'Sh, Nannie!'

We walked on, one ear well mannered enough pretending to be deaf, the other one strained to inquisitiveness. A figure came out of the gate in front of us—a man's figure, not Sirenry or Master George. Miss Mary, just behind, said 'How do you do? and good evening to you both!' as she passed us walking very quickly. We didn't know what to do, whether to go on or to go back; we did not want to seem to be spying, but we did want to see, since there seemed a chance of seeing, so we decided to walk on; but two steps afterwards, Mrs. Kidston called to us and we had to turn round. She stood in her doorway talking, and kept us there facing her, and she facing the road while she told us about the seating arrangements for the next day—as though that was what Miss Mary had been talking about—and when she had finished, and we could turn back, the road was empty. That's Mrs. Kidston all over.

The next day was the fête, and the chief speaker was a very young-looking man to be a member of Parliament; but he spoke well, and told us a lot of things about the Government and made us laugh—he was full of jokes; and all the time a voice kept saying in my ear, 'He's Miss Mary's man'; thinking that made him seem more interesting than the politics. Afterwards, seeing them ride on a merry-go-round—she on an ostrich and he holding on to the gilt pole beside her, and looking down into her face—we knew. We didn't want telling, we just knew he loved our Miss Mary; and Miss Mary—well, she must have liked him or she would have hopped off the bird next time the thing stopped, which she didn't do; nor him neither.

Alice, the second housemaid, was walking with a soldier who bought her a fairing under our eyes; they looked very happy, as we remarked to Mrs. Kidston, later, on our way home. But she thought the lad was a good-for-nothing fellow, and Alice ought to look higher.

The next few days were crowded with interest; Sirenry went to London and so did the M.P.; telegrams kept coming and going all day long. The servants-from-the-house said something was up, but they did not know what it was—they thought it was Ireland. Then when Miss Lessor's voice was absent from the next choir practice we



had a fresh subject for conversation. It seems she had a rumpus with the Vicar, who said our schoolteacher's treble was too shrill—and so it was, and a good thing to let her know; but she took offence and went out of the choir, and said she would never come back not if Parson was to ask her on bended knee—a likely thing indeed for a clergyman to do, as Mrs. Kidston said. Gradually bits of news drifted into the village, that kept us busy with excitement. One rumour, Mrs. Kidston allowed, was true—namely, that Alice the second housemaid had been given a month's notice, all along of that soldier lad who kept her out too late that night we saw them together. Alice was a nice-looking girl, and we all felt sorry she should be dismissed like that; but of course we knew her ladyship's rule was a good one and a strict one, and if it was to be broken for Alice it would be broken for every one, and then the house would be no better a place for maids than any common house in a town. Still, we were full of sorrow for her and her lad till we heard about Master George. Master George had failed in his examination and Sirenry was very angry. We didn't rightly know what it was Master George was to do or ought to have done that he didn't do; but most of us knew what it meant to have Sirenry angry, and comments on the situation usually ended with 'Poor young gentleman!' while we wondered what he would do next.

Then it became an open secret amongst us that Miss Mary was not to be allowed to marry the man of her heart, and that took a hold of us more than anything. We had seen Miss Mary grow up from a child, and everything she ever did was an interest to us. There wasn't one of us but would do anything for Miss Mary to make her happy; it seemed strange that her own father shouldn't be of the same mind; but from what we heard, he wasn't—more's the pity.

### CHAPTER III.

I don't know which day it was, but quite suddenly everybody began talking of war. We were watching a cricket-match in the park one afternoon, when people said the Germans had begun fighting; but we couldn't believe it, and the next day they said England might be drawn in, but we didn't think it likely. We had got no quarrel on with anybody; why should we interfere with Europe? What we said was, let them fight as wants to, and let them as don't keep out of it. Mrs. Kidston said if the German



Emperor and the Austrian Emperor wanted to have a go at the Czar of Russia and the French President—she got their names off as pat as that—why they could, so far as she could see, and the only part for us to take would be to let King George be the umpire. We agreed it was a very good idea and many of us wondered whether the Government had anybody clever enough to think of it.

Almost before we had finished being surprised at such talk, we heard that while we were all sleeping sound in our beds the country had gone to war at midnight. Such a time to choose when every decent Christian ought to have been saying his prayers if he wasn't snoring! And there we were, in for it up to our necks along with all the others.

The difference it made to us I can't hardly describe.

All the gay notices on our Tollhouse were covered over with papers from the War Office, that told a tale! the cricket-matches and the fêtes and the meetings all disappeared under Regulations and Calls to Arms; we stood and gasped at what we read—it didn't seem as if it could be true. What brought it home to us was when Alice's young man went off to join his regiment and took another brother with him to enlist. Alice was so excited it did not look as if she cared very much; she came down the village, all beaming smiles, and she stood talking to anyone who would listen, she was that proud of being a soldier's lass; Miss Lessor called her a shameless hussy in a whisper. She said that Sirenry was staying in London, at the War Office she thought, that Master George had been telephoning most of the day, that her ladyship had promised beds and blankets and half the house if it were wanted for a hospital, and that Miss Mary had accepted an invitation to dine and sleep somewhere the following evening without telling her ladyship, who was very angry when she found it out.

Mrs. Kidston came out to her door when she heard this, and she said: 'Now, Alice, you can talk of your own affairs to the gossips if so be you've got a mind to do it, but you don't talk about the Family, not in my hearing no-ways, so just leave Miss Mary alone.'

Alice put her head in the air, and she said: 'Oh, very well, Mrs. Kidston, then I suppose you don't want the message I was sent to you with, seeing it concerns Miss Mary. I had better not mention it perhaps.'

There was a moment's silence, then Mrs. Kidston said: 'Is it in writing, Alice?' Very clever of her, wasn't it? And Alice was obliged to give her the note she had in her jacket pocket.



Of course if Mrs. Kidston could have managed it we should never have known what happened while she was staying away with Miss Mary, going as maid as she did sometimes, when her ladyship wanted to be very particular. Certain houses she went to instead of the young maid, rather fast we heard they were, so her ladyship was quite right.

Not a word did Mrs. Kidston tell us. She was as secret as the grave. She packed up her black silk with the net front, I saw her do it because she called me in to help her, and she put in her gold brooch and her watch and chain, and when she came back I went to help her again. Do you think she told me anything? Not she. 'It was a nice house, they had been very kind to her as they always were,'—this to let me know she had stayed with the quality before,—'and Miss Mary had been very much admired.'

'Anybody special?' I asked Mrs. Kidston.

'Oh, I think they were all of one mind,' she said, and no more.

By the end of the week there was another notice on the Tollhouse, inviting all who wished to work for the soldiers to go to the house Tuesdays and Fridays at three o'clock, which of course most of us did, and were kept busy in the servants' hall, with the ladies cutting out and helping as busy as anyone; after the first time, when we had all learnt our job and knew what to do, Miss Mary would come and read to us from *The Times*, so that we had the most reliable news of anyone in the place. When there was anything very good, Miss Mary used to cut it out and paste it on cardboard, and then Mrs. Kidston would hang it on the side wall of the Tollhouse for all the village to see. Mrs. Kidston was always proud of her house, but now it became a sort of historical centre not only for the village, but for the neighbouring town: people driving past on their way to market would stop to read, then go on and throw scorn on any rumour of the High Street that lacked authority of the Tollhouse, and, returning homewards later, the same people would tell Mrs. Kidston what they'd heard and ask her if it was true. Mrs. Kidston would answer, very quiet-like, that it wasn't in *The Times* last Friday or Tuesday, as the case might be, and she hadn't heard it mentioned at the house.

When we first heard about the Russians there was tremendous excitement in our village, for we heard it from old Davies's grandson, who'd been at the junction with milk for the early train and came back straight to Mrs. Kidston with the news that ten thousand Rooshians had gone through our station in the night. Train upon



train" had gone roaring" through every ten minutes, and the porter told him they was full of Rooshians.

We all believed it because the noise of the trains had kept most of us awake. We gathered round the Tollhouse and described our sensations of the small hours to each other. Mrs. Kidston remained unconcerned. We knew why. Until she heard of this event from the family or *The Times*, she was not going to be interested in any news coming from less authentic quarters. She said she did not believe it, because it was a round-about-way for the Russians to get to Germany. She stepped outside her door and we followed her to the side wall where, with a knitting-pin, she pointed out the map and traced a direct route from St. Petersburg to Berlin. 'What's to prevent the Czar from marching straight there?' she asked. 'Nothing that I can see; and what's he want to bring them round through England for? Nothing again. It's just a lot of silly rubbish. I don't believe in nobody's bad nights. I slept very well myself from nine o'clock till six. I never heard nothing.'

Later in the morning, the butler-from-the-house rode up on his bicycle and went in to see Mrs. Kidston; when he came out Mrs. Kidston came with him, and they both went round and looked at the map of Europe, and Mrs. Kidston again marked out the direct route—from Moscow this time—to Berlin. Mr. Butler—it was his name as well as his calling—Mr. Butler shook his head, we could see that quite well, and ran his finger right away from Moscow round the top of the map, pausing it where England would be, then jumping it—I suppose across the Channel—and then ran it on again into France. This was thrilling enough for us at a distance; for Mrs. Kidston it must be convincing. The family-at-the-house evidently knew something, and Mr. Butler was in a position to tell what they knew.

Confirmation reached us that evening when Mrs. Davies—old Davies's daughter-in-law who had done a day's charing up at the house—returned with the news that the family knew all about the Russians because the Primrose gentleman had a friend who had seen a Russian officer on a platform one evening at a station in the north of England, and—here Mrs. Davies stopped, and for the moment Mrs. Kidston allowed her to take the floor, as it were, unopposed—'and the Primrose gentleman had written this to Miss Mary!'

We were silent from amazement. While searching for truth



about the Russians we had been landed suddenly into Miss Mary's love story. It made us dumb, all but Mrs. Kidston.

'How do you come to know that, Maria?' she said, rather sharp.

'I knows what I knows, but I doesn't always tell,' said Mrs. Davies, who loved a fencing-bout with the lady of the village; and we followed her with admiring eyes as she moved on to old Davies's cottage, leaving Mrs. Kidston, she hoped, discomfited.

#### CHAPTER IV.

So Miss Mary was corresponding with the Primrose gentleman! That was the thought we took to bed with us, slept on it, and still found its illuminating presence on the pillow when we woke. The war was dismissed from our minds till the middle of next day.

Just at the dinner-hour, Master George came down the road with Miss Mary; they stopped at the Tollhouse and borrowed Mrs. Kidston's bell. Those of us at our window called to the less fortunate further afield, and ran to our doors. Master George was ringing it from the middle of the cross roads. Out we went and listened. 'I want all the men of the village to give me ten minutes of their dinner-time; will they do it?'

No one answered spontaneously.

'After dinner, if you can finish ten minutes sooner. I never talk to a hungry man!'

'Right, sir, we'll come!' The women echoed, 'Yes, sir, they'll come!'

When the men collected at the cross road, we stood in our doorways and listened to Master George as he made a speech to us about the war. He did do it wonderfully well—so young, too, he looked standing there. He told us the reason why we were fighting, and he described to us the bravery of the poor Belgians, and he told us some fresh horrors of those awful Germans, and he said how we must all help our King who had given his word to support France and Belgium if they were attacked by Germany. Then he said that all the men who could go to fight must go; and as this was his last day at home—for he himself was off to-morrow—he had come to see how many would enlist from his own village before he went. Master George said he hoped the women would



be brave and send the men off cheerful-like and not try to stop them. He knew war was hard on the women, he said; for they stayed at home and thought of all their boys were enduring, while the men went off and had all the excitement of the fight; and even if they were wounded they had the glory of knowing they had done their duty to their country.

Then Miss Mary began to talk; and she said, very clear, 'Don't think we are asking you to do more than we are ready to do. We are giving'—here her voice trembled a little; but she went on softly, 'we are giving our best. All of us have to make sacrifices; and up at the house and here in the village, I think we women won't be behind any other women in the land. Master George is going'—she laid her hand on her brother's arm and kept it there; Mrs. Kidston in her doorway wiped her eyes furtively as she heard the break in Miss Mary's voice—'and I want to tell you something about him that he won't tell you himself. He went up to London three weeks ago, and he enlisted as a private because he wouldn't waste any more time waiting for a commission, and he worked and drilled and marched and lived just as he is asking you to do. He never told us, because he thought her ladyship mightn't like it. We only knew he was very busy with something connected with the war; and then, the day before yesterday, he was made a lieutenant in our own regiment, and to-morrow he goes off to join, and, after some months' training, he hopes to get to the Front.'

'Three cheers for Miss Mary!'

We felt very choky in the throat as we gave them, followed by three cheers for Master George; then one of our lads held up his hand. 'I'll join, please, sir!' 'And I, sir!' 'Right, sir, so'll I!'

Master George turned his head towards the Tollhouse. 'Pencil and paper, please, Nannie!' he called out. 'I will just take your names now, and I'll meet you here again this evening,' he said, 'with the proper forms. My father has promised that every man who joins shall be taken on again when the war is over; and her ladyship says you may take it from me that she and Miss Mary and Mrs. Kidston will take care of the women and children while you are gone.'

Well, by the time Mrs. Kidston had finished washing up her belated dinner it was time for us to go to the house—it being one of our working afternoons—and we did more in the time than we had ever done before, feeling, I suppose, that we might be working for some of our own. Miss Mary came in to read to us, and was



then called away to see a visitor. We didn't think much of that, and went on working, and, by 'm by, tea was ready; and just as we finished, Miss Mary came and apologised for leaving us so long, and said, to make up for her absence, would we like to see Master George in his uniform?

Mrs. Kidston answered for us all, and Miss Mary went out into the passage, and we heard her say, 'Come along G., they want to see you!' Then there was a lovely sound on the stone floor outside, and in come her ladyship and Miss Mary and Master George and another gentleman, both dressed like officers. We couldn't say a word, we were so excited. Master George showed himself off very well, and he did look fine in his khaki. Her ladyship was so pretty and proud as she watched him, saying nice little things to us all about the enlisting and about letting our men go, and how it was always our best we must give when the King wanted it, and I saw her lip quiver as she said it. Miss Mary and the other officer stood in the background, and I saw a glance pass between them that told me they had found the Best, and no mistake; I fancy they had told each other before that. I felt my cheeks burning at having seen that look and all it said. I tried to get behind Mrs. Davies, I was so afraid of catching anybody's eye. Miss Mary, she looked so sweet, and the top of her head just reached that officer's shoulder, and something about him clanked on the ground when he moved: I don't know whether 'twas his sword, or his spurs, or his boots, or what it was. I didn't seem able to look; but the sound was just lovely, and made my heart beat quick. I can't think what Miss Mary's must have been like—standing there close to him, and him looking at her as if she was his Best.

Then her ladyship said, 'Well, Mary, we must not keep them any longer,' and, turning at the door, she said, 'Good evening to you all!' and went out followed by the others. Master George jumped over a form, he was in such spirits; then he saluted, and said what sounded like 'olive oil, Nannie'; and Mrs. Kidston laughed and seemed to say, 'Oh rivers, Master George.' I suppose it was some joke in a foreign tongue she had picked up in the old days when she was nurse-at-the-house.

The walk home to the village was very nearly a wrangle. Somebody said that the new officer gentleman was the same as the Primrose gentleman, and the rest of us contradicted. We knew it wasn't, but somebody else, probably Mrs. Davies, knew it was. Swore it was she did, over and over again, and I got that angry



with Mrs. Kidston for saying nothing when she could have settled the discussion once for all, that I got a heart attack and had to rest on a stone heap to get my breath comfortably, and the others waited round, all but Mrs. Kidston, who went on alone in her glory and liked it.

## CHAPTER V.

MR. COLLINS was very good, he gave the men who wanted it an hour off the next morning to go and play Master George from the station. They agreed to work an hour later to make up at the other end, and away they went, with their brass band and their drum, and carrying the Union Jack and the Russian and Belgian flags. Our eight men who had enlisted went by the same train, so it was a wonderful sight for our Junction. I believe the passengers put their heads out of the windows and asked what was going on, and, when they saw Master George and the officer, someone said it was the Prince of Wales and Lord Kitchener; that's, I expect, how one rumour got about which came back to our ears a few days later.

When the band returned they were full of stories about the Russians. They had been seen in thousands upon thousands going through the country in express trains for three nights, and with all the blinds down. It was to be kept a most awful secret, and we only whispered the news from one to another for fear of a spy anywhere in the neighbourhood. The War Office didn't want the Germans to know, so we were to keep any news to ourselves and not speak of it in public. Mindful of this, we only tip-toed in twos and threes at a time to look at the map on the Tollhouse and mark how the Russians came. From husky throats we caught the words 'Archangel' and 'ships': 'Russian ships been laid up for the winter suddenly ordered out'—'north of Sweden,' 'top of Scotland,' 'Leith, Liverpool, Cardiff, Southampton, and Dover.' Then 'transports' and 'the Channel, Calais, and Ostend. To get in behind—cut communications, and surprise the enemy. After that the end of the war would be within sight.'

We gasped: 'Who had thought of it? Such a clever plan!'

Some man, who didn't want his name mentioned, had thought it out two years before and told the War Office; so far, it had been one of the best-kept secrets the world had ever known. We were simply thrilled, and asked Mrs. Kidston what she thought. She



surprised us by saying she didn't believe it. We asked her reasons. She said it sounded too clever; and when we said 'Why?' she just couldn't see the object of the train journeys! If they got all those troops to Scotland by sea they could get to France by sea; and if the North Sea wasn't safe, there was the Irish Channel spoiling for a look in. No; the more she heard the less she believed. It was a fine plan, but a silly waste of time.

We were all very cheered when we got the news of the Heligoland battle—it seemed to increase the confidence of the village; and we had some splendid pictures of the Admirals posted up on the Tollhouse. My favourite was Beatty, but Mrs. Kidston's choice was the one with a look of the Bishop of London. Quite sweet she was on him, if one could say such a thing of our lady of the village. When Maria Davies, pointing to him, asked 'Who's he?' and we said 'Christian,' she snorted loudly, 'Thank you for nought,' she said, 'he couldn't be heathen, not if he tried.' On finding it to be the gentleman's name as well as his calling, of course nothing so suitable had ever come Maria's way before.

Reading about them all doing so well at sea, and the thought of our Russian secret, and the effect it would have on the Germans, made us talk as if the war would soon be over. Maria Davies said at the house they believed it was going to last for years, and, as far as Alice was concerned, she must say it would be a good thing if it did. For her ladyship was going to keep the girl on now her soldier had gone to the war, so there she was 'settled' you might say for life, with good wages, in a first-class situation if she only behaved.

When the notices came out about the separation allowances for wives and families, we stood in crowds round the Tollhouse reading them, and Mrs. Davies wasn't the only one with a husband in the Reserve as thought 'twould be a good thing if the war lasted a year or two. 'Shameful!' Miss Lessor called it, to hear the way some of the women talked. They didn't seem to mind their men having to go once they knew there was to be money for them at the same time. Strange, I thought it; but Mrs. Kidston called it natural.

'Them as always has money and never has husbands can't understand the feelings of them as always has husbands and never has money,' she said. 'Change is what people like—and no bad thing either.'

I looked at Mrs. Kidston with surprise. I had never heard



her refer to the married state in such a mercenary spirit, and I wondered what was in her mind. Then suddenly a thought took shape and I leaned forward, speaking very quietly.

'Are you thinking of Miss Mary?' I said.

'Maybe I am and maybe I'm not,' Mrs. Kidston answered. 'She's given me plenty to think of with this scheme of hers for the Belgians, has Miss Mary.'

'For the Belgians?' I said disappointed. 'What scheme is that?'

'To take in a family here in the village and look after them ourselves. I'm all against it, I am, and so's Sirenry, and I only hope so be as he'll be strong enough to stand out. We've got enough to do for our own people without messing about with foreigners, sorry as I am for them for being foreigners and having to live where the Germans can walk into their country and spoil everything. It must be hard to bear not to have the sea between you and your enemy. Still I can't always agree with Miss Mary.'

'When Miss Mary has a home of her own she won't need to ask you or Sirenry to agree with her,' I ventured musingly. 'She will be able to do as she likes then.'

'So you all think,' said Mrs. Kidston, 'but for how long do any of us ever do as we like?'

'Miss Mary's at the age just now I should say. Is there any reason, Mrs. Kidston, a good reason why Miss Mary shouldn't do as she likes—in the matter of marriage for instance?'

'There's a text in the Bible,' said Mrs. Kidston, laying down her work in her lap and looking at me fixedly, 'which says as none of us can live to ourselves, nor die to ourselves, and St. Paul knew, if it was St. Paul, as well as I know that few of us marry for ourselves. I don't expect Miss Mary will be any exception.'

'... I think he's wonderfully good-looking, Mrs. Kidston—I'm sure, in his uniform—'

'Who is?'

'The officer, the Primrose gentleman we saw at the house the other day.' I hazarded this, hoping for proof from my listener that they were one and the same and I got my reward.

'Oh him!' Mrs. Kidston said, as though he were the last man to be in our thoughts. 'He's so poor, nice gentleman, too, though he is, Miss Mary mustn't think of him.'

'Poor? And him a Member of Parliament? Four hundred a year anyway in his pocket.'



'That don't go far, not with a Unionist. It seems a lot to a Radical who's never had nothing of his own and feels himself a rich man when he takes parish pay, but it's different for a gentleman and a Conservative who's always given himself and his time gladly to his country for nothing. He don't care about a position in what you may call the State Workhouse.'

## CHAPTER VI.

THINGS began to happen very fast, so fast there was hardly time for us to give our minds to one thing before another was on us. The Belgians came, of course we knew they would, 'twasn't likely Sirenry, even backed by Mrs. Kidston, would be able to stand out against Miss Mary. So they came, and we formed a committee, with our Reverend Parson in the chair, and Mr. Butler as the treasurer; very interesting it was too, seeing after them poor things, and learning of all their sufferings, not that we could understand their talk, not even her ladyship, who can speak in three different languages, but not theirs, for theirs was gibberish pure and simple, as our own ears could tell.

What with the Belgians, and the Red Cross, and the work for the soldiers, you'd think we had enough to do; but we had to make time for prayer as well, every day. A list was made of our men's names and put up alongside the war-map on the Tollhouse; and we being such an old-fashioned village, Parson, as we call him, used to come at ten minutes to one and read out their names and say a little prayer for us all to join in, the church being too far away for most of us, except on Sundays. One day, after he had finished, in the silence before we moved, there was an awful sob. We all turned round to see who it should be, and it was Alice-from-the-house. She was all bowed down and crumpled-like, and sobbing as if her heart would break.

Parson, he put his hands together again and bent back his head, looking as if he was speaking straight to God in heaven.

'And not only for those we have mentioned, but also for ourselves, O Saviour of the world, who by Thy Cross and Precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.'

'We humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.' Most of us said it



parrot-like, without knowing we were saying it. 'Poor Alice, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord.'

Mrs. Kidston moved, and signed to us to go. We went out quietly, leaving Parson and Alice behind. Young Davies told his mother that Alice's sweetheart had been wounded; he didn't know any details, or how she had heard, but he knew all the servants-at-the-house were very sorry about it; so were we. Poor Alice!

The next day there was an awful casualty list in the papers, and we saw the name of Alice's private; and amongst the officers killed, we saw a cousin of Sirenry's—such a fine gentleman—who always came to shoot here every autumn. It seemed cruel to think of him put out of life by the Germans. Then we heard of horrors such as we couldn't believe; and folk began to talk of the retreat, and of our losing the war, and of the enemy coming to England; and altogether, what with one thing and another, and the seeing of Alice's sweetheart and Sirenry's cousin both in the same list, showing us how equal we all are in a time like this, the courage of the village just broke down, for the war had come home to us all.

Mrs. Kidston tried to be strong; but even she went up to the house for consolation; and while she was there the telephone rang, and Mr. Butler took the message down in writing, as he always does. When he took it to her ladyship, Miss Mary was in the boudoir talking to Mrs. Kidston; but she got up and read the message over her mother's shoulder. Then she went quite white, and Mrs. Kidston caught her, as she thought she was going to fall.

Her ladyship looked up as if she couldn't be sure what to do. Miss Mary said, 'Oh, mother!' and walked to the window with her handkerchief pressed tight to her lips.

Mr. Butler said, 'They're holding the line, m'lady.'

Her ladyship nodded. 'Say yes, we shall be very pleased.'

Miss Mary tried to be brave. Mrs. Kidston said it was worse than if she hadn't tried. Her eyes were full of tears, but she kept them back from falling, and bit her lips till all the blood went out of them. Her ladyship said, 'I don't know what your father will say, darling. I hope I'm doing right.'

'I don't care, mother!' Miss Mary said. 'I don't care!' and Mrs. Kidston tried to withdraw.

Of course it was no use pretending that the village did not know the facts of the case pretty well after that. Not that Mrs.



Kidston told a soul—we can all bear witness to that—but it got about, a little bit from one and a little bit from another; and Mrs. Davies, having been up scrubbing, helped to fit the story together, so that we knew as well as if we had been told up at the house.

The Primrose Captain had been ordered to the Front, and he had got a few hours' leave before starting, and, man-like, had wanted to see his very Best before he went. He had telephoned to the house and asked if he might come and say good-bye. He did not say who to specially, but just might he come and say good-bye, as he was ordered to the Front. This was the message Miss Mary had read when she cried out 'Oh, mother!'

It must have wrung her heart when she heard Miss Mary's cry and knew how they loved each other, and Sirenry all against the match, and knew that she had it in her power to make them happy or miserable. I don't believe the village could have thought so well of her ladyship ever again if she had acted differently from what she did: our village think a lot of her ladyship, but it thinks the world of Miss Mary.

So the Captain came, and what he said and what she said is not for us to know; but the impression we all have on our minds is that our Miss Mary and the Primrose Captain mean to marry each other, whatever Sirenry says, so soon as the war is over, if not before.

When he'd gone, his name was put on the prayer list at the Toll-house; and the next day, when we met together and Parson coming in a hurry had begun to pray, there was Miss Mary kneeling by the door, and she heard all the names given out—all our men and boys; and then we thought to hear her Captain's name, but it never came; and Parson, thinking he knew them all off by heart, never looking at the list, was beginning another prayer when the whole lot of us whispered together under our breath the same thing at the same moment: 'Miss Mary's man! You've forgot Miss Mary's man, sir.'

## CHAPTER VII.

THE courage of the village broke down. It wasn't only the Captain's going that did it: it was everything coming at once, you may say. The awful horrors we read of in the papers, the lists of wounded and killed, the death of our village postman—a Reservist, Alice's



sweetheart wounded, Miss Mary's Captain gone, Sirenry always in London, and Master George wanting to go to the Front every day and her ladyship bravely dreading it. For these things that had happened to the Belgians might happen to us. If the Germans came, they would happen; and they would destroy us and our village with no more thought than they destroyed those beautiful towns with cathedrals and halls like we see in the *Daily Mail* pictures. It was fearful to think of, and our courage broke down.

Why we didn't remain broken is due to Mrs. Kidston.

To make a long story short, Mrs. Kidston told Alice one day of her visit to London, last spring year, when she went to the opening of Parliament. I believe it still lost nothing in the telling, for we had always found each new audience was as impressed as we had been originally.

Alice was thrilled, and asked why she had never heard this tale before. She had only been at the house some ten months or so, and, when she came, the story had become stale in the village or given way to something else of new importance. Interesting as the narrative was in itself, the real interest lay in our prophetic who, in her simple way, brought back courage to the village, and has been henceforth not without honour even in her own country during her own lifetime.

Alice went out of the Tollhouse full of what she had heard and seen. The first person she met was told by her of what Mrs. Kidston had said, and that person said, 'Lor', now, fancy her remembering that!' Then Alice going east up to the house, and the other person going west through the village, both bearing the prophecy on the tips of their tongues, met and informed others, who caught fire with the light of memory and passed on; a flow of enthusiasm taking the place of former despondency and fear, which spread with as fervid a faith throughout our village and beyond.

The next day the housekeeper invited Mrs. Kidston to take tea in the room; the war was discussed, Mrs. Kidston's prophecy was revived, and hope from below stairs sprang upward through the house.

Miss Mary called at the Tollhouse the following morning, when I was there, just before prayer-time, and she said, 'Do you remember, Nannie, what you saw in London last year, and how you felt it was an omen about the Germans in case of war?' Miss Mary said it lightly, just like that, as if it had only now occurred



to her, and not at all as though her maid had mentioned it with reverence the night before when brushing her hair: mentioned it as if she were quoting Scripture or had just met one of the wonders of the world.

'Yes, Miss Mary, it lingers in my mind. Folk won't let me forget it, you see. They come round here with their long faces and their terrifying stories till I'm fair worried to death. "Supposing the Germans win," they whine, "whatever shall we do?" "They won't win," I say. "And how do you know, Mrs. Kidston," they say; "you can't be sure beforehand?" "I am sure," I say. "Do you think it was for nothing that I was sent to London to see the sight I saw? The representative of German culture"—that's the word I see the papers all use, Miss Mary—"the representative of the great War Lord, in the hands of our police, him not able to make any progress but for their help, do you think this thing was an accident, or do you believe in the God above?" It was an omen, I say, to them; and though many people saw what was happening it was given to me to see what it meant, and I can't forget it, Miss Mary; for at times, when the news is bad, this village do want reminding that one of themselves has been privileged to see what is really going to happen in the world, or they might be craven cowards for want of a word in season.'

'Dear Nannie!' Miss Mary said, 'I love to hear you talk. It does me a lot of good. Sometimes, I'm a craven coward, Nannie, when I think of what's going on over there.'

'I won't admit but what it's hard, Miss Mary, for all of us; but if you've once seen the vision you can't forget it. Why the dear Lord lifted a corner of the curtain for me, I can't pretend to say; but that He never despises the humblest soul, and, maybe, looking down on His children having a family squabble—for that's what it comes to, Miss Mary, when you think of the royal people on both sides, all blood connections of Queen Victoria—it may be when He sees the German Emperor so impudent, giving orders to the Almighty what's to be done for his side, that the Lord may have looked round for somebody in England, just the opposite of the German Emperor, and He thought to use me, because—well, nobody here in their senses would ever think to use me for a contrast to the Kaiser. But "what I do," He once said, "thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." That seems to explain many things, to my way of thinking, when doubts arise.'



'Dear Nannie!' Miss Mary said again, 'your faith is very comforting.'

'I've always found it a comfort not to be clever,' said Mrs. Kidston, 'for then you can believe. Intellect has never been the snare to me that it has to the Kaiser; nor I've never wished it should.'

### CHAPTER VIII.

Mrs. Kidston's omen was talked of in the village next our own, and was given unhesitatingly as a reason for the faith that is in us when our spirits stand the test of bad rumours which assail us from time to time.

The fame of our prophetess also spread to the town, and vulgar people came out on their bicycles and their sidecars to see Mrs. Kidston and have their fortunes told—which of course she would be able to do, so they thought, not knowing our lady as well as we do. Mrs. Kidston's indignation was amusing to see. She refused to speak with the curious, more than just to be very polite and say they had come to the wrong house; on being pressed, she 'really couldn't say' who the fortune-teller could be: not in our village she had never heard of one, only the witch of Endor she knew, who had come to a bad end long ago. The less vulgar, feeling they must have made a mistake, would then soothe Mrs. Kidston's ruffled fur sufficiently for them to draw from her the origin of her apparently misplaced fame.

Once a week, or at the most twice, Mrs. Kidston would permit herself the pleasure of relating her experience to a new audience—that is, if they approached her in the right spirit; and bits of these audiences drifting away to other villages and towns, told the tale with various additions, so that the faith of many was strengthened, and a great belief in the power of Old England came out solid in the mass of people with whom our village was in touch. It astonished us when Parson came back from his holiday to hear that in his club in London, one evening, he had listened to some men talking about the German Emperor, and telling each other what a Magi had said long ago and of how true it was coming. Another one said the most marvellous prophecy was two hundred years old, and had been made by a monk; and another one knew this war had been foretold by a gipsy early in this very year and it was to be found in some almanack that nobody bought at the time but is



now in great demand all over the United Kingdom. Then, imagine our Parson's surprise when another man, who looked like a soldier, said, 'Well, the best I've heard, so far, is absolutely true; I know the old woman and I know the village where she lives, for I have stayed at the house there for a cricket-match. She knows that England is going to win this war, and she bases her knowledge not on a dream or a vision, but on a fact that when it happened revealed itself to her as an omen.' Thereupon the gentleman told the other gentlemen about the German Ambassador being dragged to Parliament by the London police, and how that was his first appearance in public just when he wanted to make a fine show, and his Princess there beside him, and the crowd looking on and all; and how this old lady from the country, meaning Mrs. Kidston, watching with all her eyes, had seen in this predicament an omen of the future, and, what was more, she was using this insight to some purpose. She had heartened up the neighbourhood where she lived to such a degree that you couldn't mention the possibility of Germany winning, anywhere within fifty miles of her, without risking a very forcible argument and probably a row.

Parson says he lay back in his chair and laughed to himself, and wished Mrs. Kidston could hear. One of the other gentlemen said, 'But when was this—I don't remember it?' And the soldier gentleman said it was a year or two ago, and he remembered seeing something about it in the papers; but it had not impressed him very much as he had not been there at the time, and very few people spoke of it at all.

'Was it Count Bieberstein?' somebody asked him.

'No; Bieberstein died, you remember, very suddenly, and Prince Lichnowsky took his place.'

'They don't seem to be lucky over here,' another one said; and then Parson joined in and told them the old lady was Mrs. Kidston, and not very old either, and was a parishioner of his.

(I've got him to write down those names for me, so they are all right.)

But fifty miles! that was what struck us all of a heap. That the faith of our village in Mrs. Kidston's omen had spread over fifty miles away, and was having a real effect on other people! It did seem strange and rather wonderful till Parson explained that it was in the same way as with the Russians. 'Everybody bucked up all over England,' he said, 'and felt as strong again when a porter let out that secret to a traveller on the line.'



Now, lest we should be uplifted by having a prophetess in our midst, the very seal of our faith bearing so perfect an impression had to be shown to us on the other side.

Mrs. Kidston's words, so far, had all been for good, no one will deny ; but after a bit, we heard the recruiting for Lord Kitchener's Army was not quite so strong as it was. None of us supposed this could be laid at Mrs. Kidston's door—she had nothing to do with recruiting, no more than having the prayer list for those who did it in her house ; but will it be believed that, towards the end of October, Sirenry walked up the road one day with a gentleman beside him and took him in to see Mrs. Kidston ? Nothing much in that, as our village is accustomed to seeing visitors from the house taken to call on Mrs. Kidston ; and we don't envy her—not in a nasty way of envy—we think it's as it should be, considering her position in the family. But this gentleman was a soldier and a friend of Sirenry's at the War Office. Well, they both went in, and they began to talk to Mrs. Kidston about the omen, and they said what a great thing it was for us to believe that Germany couldn't beat us ; and all the time Mrs. Kidston kept feeling something more was coming. And sure enough she was right. For this War-officer with Sirenry told her quite solemnly that the lads in our part of the country would no longer enlist, and the reason they gave for it was always the same reason—that it didn't matter who went to the war, whether many or few, for England was going to win anyhow. When the War Office in London heard this they were very puzzled—upset, some of them seem to have been—and they talked to the lads serious-like ; but it wasn't no good, the boys, and the men too, were certain sure they needn't fight, Germany's downfall had been foretold along with England's triumph. ' England's going to win, with us or without us ! That's a fact, sir. England's going to win, sir ! ' That's what they all said. Then Lord Kitchener, or somebody high up, said they must trace back to the origin of this affair, and the War-officer—this friend of Sirenry's—being the actual same man as Parson talked to on the subject in his club, said he could trace the origin without more ado. And trace it he did, right into our village, and through the door of our Tollhouse. We've known Mrs. Kidston for a wonderful woman all these years being and doing many things, but none of us ever knew she was an origin till the War Office found it out for us.

Then they wanted her help. Curious how big the little things



do seem to grow at a time like this ! and also *vice versa*, as the French saying is. Mrs. Kidston, not a very big person in any sense of the word, and our village not as you may say large, exactly, suddenly became more important than any market town within our knowledge. She was required to help the Government, who were anxious to have the Army such a size that we should in truth be able to frighten Germany as Germany had tried to frighten us.

‘Of course we are going to win,’ the War-officer said, ‘we know that as well as you do, my dear madam,’ that’s what he called her, she told us herself, when the conversation was over. ‘My dear madam, we know we are going to win ; but you understand, Germany does not know it yet, and the sooner she does know it the quicker the war will be over ; and the best way for her to know it is for the Emperor to see us with so vast an army that it will be useless for him to go on fighting us. Therefore, I beg that you will not only keep up the faith in your omen, which is of very great importance for the country, but that you will also use your influence with the unmarried men, and induce them to play their part in the most historical war the world has ever seen.’

‘There, Nannie !’ said Sirenry, ‘you’ve got your work cut out for you !’

‘Seems like a game of bluff, Sirenry, it do,’ Mrs. Kidston said ; ‘but I’ll tackle the men. They will understand that Germany doesn’t know what we know, and I’ll make them proud to think they can teach the Emperor something yet. Then they’ll see a reason for fighting him even though they know he’s beat beforehand, according to the omen.’

‘That’s exactly it, madam,’ the War-officer said, stroking his moustache and looking over Mrs. Kidston’s head at her china cupboard beyond. ‘What a charming home you have here ! I quite envy you living in the country.’

‘Don’t mention it, sir,’ Mrs. Kidston said, always very quick with the right answer. ‘I was just as happy when I lived in London with the family, which I did do for many years.’

‘Quite so, quite so !’ the War-officer said. And then Sirenry said ‘Good morning, Mrs. Kidston !’ and they both went away down the road towards the house.

If this had happened to anybody else of the same standing as Mrs. Kidston, and in any other village of our sort, I should have said it was a fairy-tale and not to be believed ; but there it is set down, gospel truth as it happened, and the pill in the jam only



began to taste that evening when Alice-at-the-house brought some more flannel to be cut out by Mrs. Kidston's shears. Alice spoke of the War-officer to Mrs. Kidston as his lordship, and Mrs. Kidston winced. She hadn't known her visitor was a lord, and she had called him sir all the time. What made it so specially hard for Mrs. Kidston was that, with her gift of perception, she felt it was a thing she ought to have known.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE war had been going nearly three months when Master George went out to it. Brave he was. Brave as a lion. He came down to say good-bye to her ladyship, and, returning through the village on his way to the station, he stopped at the Tollhouse, and Mrs. Kidston came running out, and he didn't wait a minute, he just put his arms round her neck and he said 'Good-bye, Nannie,' and he kissed her, and the motor went off again, with him turning round and waving his hand to the last.

All that day and all the next day, Mrs. Kidston was extremely busy with newspapers, scissors, and paste. The result of her efforts was read by us all on the third day. In large printing letters, written with the sharpened end of a match, was a new notice on the Tollhouse.

### 'FORTUNES TOLD HERE FOR NOTHING!'

Underneath this announcement was pasted cuttings from various accounts of the burning, sacking, and pillaging of Louvain, Rheims, and Antwerp; one or two short paragraphs concerning the torture and killing of old men, women, and children, were added in a corner. Underneath this small print came again the large-written words of Mrs. Kidston's hand:—

### 'THIS IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US IF YOU DON'T GO TO THE WAR!'

Alongside, hung Lord Kitchener's appeal for his new army, together with a fresh map of the present situation.

On next market-day, you might have thought our Tollhouse was the hub of the universe. The people crowded round, both going and coming. They fetched others to read, and Mrs. Kidston sat in her doorway knitting, and graciously answering any questions



put to her—quite unusual for Mrs. Kidston, except for a member of the family; and when one of us, braver than the rest, asked her reason, she just looked at us and said, 'Don't we want Master George home for Christmas?'

The men enjoyed talking to Mrs. Kidston; we never knew exactly what she said to them, but it seemed to be what they liked. They went off laughing, 'to frighten the Germans,' as they said, and to play football with the Allies in France.

Now we are into November, and the lists—those awful lists—are coming out most days in the papers. We hold our breaths as we read them; and when our men are not mentioned, we have our daily prayer mixed with thanksgiving at the Tollhouse that they are still safe, and that Miss Mary is still getting letters from the Primrose Captain.

The family are in mourning—leastways they are in black or black and white, for cousins who had been mentioned in dispatches and then died, and for a sailor uncle of her ladyship's and his young son, a midshipman, who had gone down in the North Sea. 'Twas dreadful it was, no one spared their toll of suffering.

Then, one day, there was a hush when nothing seemed to be happening, very quiet like it was, and towards evening a rumour began to stir amongst us. I don't know where it came from, but it settled in our bones that something was amiss. The servants at the house told Mrs. Davies there had been a lot of telephoning to her ladyship, they did not know what it was, for no messages were given to them; her ladyship herself was wanted each time.

When Parson came for prayer next morning, he said there was very grave news, and he feared the family were in trouble; Miss Mary's man was missing, and to-day's paper gave his name under the double heading—'Wounded and Missing.'

Wounded and missing!—the Primrose Captain! Miss Mary's man! We hated to hear it. We wouldn't believe harm could come to him—not to Miss Mary's man. Dear Lord, not to Miss Mary's man. We knelt on a little longer than usual in silence. I doubt if we were praying in words, yet the desire of each of us was possibly wafted to heaven by old Davies. In a shaking voice the old man breathed out, 'O Lord, take my boy . . . he's the only one I have . . . my only son . . . but I give him, Lord, . . . if so be . . . as he'll do instead of . . . Miss Mary's man. . . .' His voice broke, and he was scarcely audible. . . . 'O Lord, take my boy from me, I pray, I pray, . . . but spare Miss Mary's man



for her. Oh! spare Miss Mary's man.' We all murmured it after him, and Parson he said it too, very softly. 'Spare Miss Mary's man, we pray thee, good Lord. Amen. Amen.'

Did the Primrose Captain know, far away on the battlefield, what we were doing in the Tollhouse for him? There wasn't a man nor a woman in that little room but didn't agree with old Davies. There wasn't one of us that in spirit didn't offer our best, there and then, so long as Miss Mary might keep hers.

When we rose, Mrs. Davies was crying; but she said 'Amen' with the rest of us, and she took the old man's arm and led him out very gently. They all disappeared, and I was left last—alone with Mrs. Kidston.

'Speaking for the village,' I said, 'that's the sacrifice not of one, but of all.'

Mrs. Kidston agreed. 'Of all,' she said. 'We are ready to give; but will the Lord—will He take our offerings? I fear it's against nature.' She looked through the doorway and over the tree-tops in the sunshine. 'If the Lord of Hosts wants a soldier up there in the blue, and he sees the Primrose Captain, why it's only nature to take him instead of old Davies's son, same as the Germans would. It's only nature, my dear, I'm thinking.'

## CHAPTER X.

THE war hadn't been on more than three months and a bit when we suffered in our village as bitterly as most.

Up at the house, the light had gone out of Sirenry's eyes. There was a silence spreading heavily from the house to the village. Master George was dead.

Towards evening, there had been a telegram for Sirenry; and the next morning our men going to work saw the flag at half-mast. They asked the reason, and, when told, there seemed to be a cry of anguish from every house, muffled, because of her ladyship.

Master George! It couldn't be. It could not be our Master George! Why, 'twas only the other day he was a little lad, playing at soldiers amongst us all. Our little lad he was, for he belonged to the village as much as any of the boys, and he had gone to the war in his khaki—brave as a lion, had Master George—only three weeks before. Our first thought was for her ladyship and the family, but our second was for Mrs. Kidston—his old Nannie. How would she bear it?



We went about our work all morning with tears in our eyes. Nobody spoke above a whisper. We couldn't. The grief that we felt could not be spoken of by us any more than by Mrs. Kidston. For the first time in the last twelve years, the door of the Tollhouse was shut when there was no visitor inside. Later in the day, she came out and went up to the house, and Parson came as usual, and we had prayers, but without Mrs. Kidston. She couldn't face us and them just at once.

We had a lovely service for him in the church : not only for him, it was for all that had died in the war. It was a lovely service. Such a lot of music, with an anthem ; and Miss Lessor sung the treble without any going down on bended knee of anybody. She just asked to be allowed to sing for Master George, and Parson he let her without a word, and she sang better than she ever done in her life. Quite true she was, and soft ; it was wonderful to hear her.

And the family were fine. My word ! but we can be proud of the family in our village. They do set us a noble example at every turn, both in life and death ; their practice is better than a Bishop's precepts. Sirenry looked bowed and broken, but fine, very fine, he was ; and her ladyship was upright as ever, but her dear face looked like wax. Not a particle of colour in it, and she wasn't in mourning. Nothing new and gloomy for Master George—just what she had been wearing for her sailor uncle and the cousins.

And Miss Mary—well, who can blame her with her own trouble sore upon her young heart ?—she kept her face hidden, she did, and we knew she was crying, and didn't wonder. We cried with her. Who could help it, remembering her Primrose Captain and his uncertain fate, and the now certain fate of her brother, Master George ? It was awful for her, poor young lady, and she not accustomed to sorrow. Mrs. Kidston sat with the children—they would have it—and it made her seem like the old Nannie again of long, long ago. She was in deeper black than any of the family, and was the only one with a black border to her handkerchief, which no one could help noticing.

We sang ' Fight the Good Fight,' and ' For all the Saints '—leastways the choir managed it. Most of us were too choked to sing, though we wanted to, for they were Master George's favourite hymns ; and then Parson preached a beautiful sermon. None who heard it could ever forget it. About striving lawfully it was, from Timothy, that ' if a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully ' ; and, without mentioning names, it



seemed to point to Master George all through, in one way, and the German Emperor in another. Wonderful clever combination it must have been, for two people more unlike you couldn't find, unless it was Mrs. Kidston.

And that's where we are in our village after three months and a bit of this awful war. We mayn't have done much, not as much as in London or the big towns perhaps, but we've done our best, and we've given our Best. We have given Master George out and out to the Lord of Hosts, Who can crown him or not as He thinks fit, knowing as we do that he strove lawfully while he was with us here on earth. From his first cricket match with us here on the village green, a little lad in his white suit playing with our lads against the town boys, he strove lawfully for the mastery. He learnt to play the game, did Master George, on our green, and he played it right through life, and we know he played it in his death on the battle-field. He wouldn't care about the crown particularly, no more do we, he just did what he did because he couldn't do any-how different, could Master George, but I feel he'll like to know about the milk-boy the morning that the news was known. He went to the Tollhouse as usual, seemingly quite brave, but when he saw Mrs. Kidston, he broke down, poor lad, and setting his can in the corner he cried hard. Mrs. Kidston said 'What's the matter?' first of all, then she knew and she said, 'Is it Master George?' and old Davies' grandson put his arms against the wall and buried his face in them. 'He was my Hero,' he sobbed out, 'my hero was Master George,' and Mrs. Kidston just let him stay and cry with her.

'Mine too,' we all say when we hear the story; only nineteen, but a hero to us all is Sirenry's eldest son and heir.

Poor Sirenry, broken and bowed, but fine, very fine he is. He has forgiven her ladyship for letting Miss Mary see the Primrose Captain before he went to the war; and we think from little bits we hear that he has forgiven the Primrose Captain for loving Miss Mary so. Nice he is to her too; walking round the garden very often with his arm on her shoulder talking: perhaps about Master George, perhaps about her man, wounded and still missing.

The Tollhouse is still the centre of attraction, for the latest news is always posted up by Mrs. Kidston.

And the roll of honour is there—our village roll of honour—for all to read, with dear Master George's name last at the moment of writing, but not least; and the prayer list beside it still has Alice's



sweetheart on it, and the name of Miss Mary's man wounded and missing—our Primrose Captain.

Mrs. Kidston, looking at it one day with me, said quietly, 'He'll come back. I know that, he'll come back to Miss Mary, as sure as the German Emperor will be beaten by King George. One's as certain as the other.'

'How do you know, Mrs. Kidston?' I said under my breath.

'I don't know how, I just know,' she said. 'It's going to be, it's got to be, the faith of the village depends on it. The Primrose Captain is coming back to Miss Mary, you'll see.' She ran her eye down the Roll of Honour. 'The village is paying toll to the Lord of Hosts,' she said softly, 'but we can still say "Blessed be the Name of the Lord."'

The most unselfish thing Mrs. Kidston ever did, and the bravest and the kindest, was when she gave her own Master George's letter to the village.

He wrote to his old Nannie, did Master George, from a place unknown; and Mrs. Kidston, when she received it, was like a weeping Queen. Proud and glad she was, through her tears, for it reached her a week after she knew her boy was dead.

She only kept it to herself one day, the next it was hanging behind a sheet of glass bound round the edge, by our carpenter, with strong brown paper. Not on the side wall of the Tollhouse. Not along with other maps and notices. It hung by itself in the middle of Mrs. Kidston's door. When the door was shut, we could read it from the road. When the door was open, as it usually was, we had to stand in the porch. Mrs. Kidston let us stand, and encouraged us to talk. I think it was the finest thing she ever did, not keeping it all to herself. Since then she has had her reward, for she is known as the best recruiting-sergeant in five towns, and she loves to have it said for Master George's sake.

This is the little letter that he wrote her the last full day he was alive:—

'DEAR OLD NANNIE,—If you could see me now, and the state of my clothes, you would take a fit, and then I know you would want to wash me and mend me. We are dirty from head to foot, dog tired, but gay as larks. If it were not for seeing the other poor fellows knocked out, this would be the most glorious life a man can live, if only for an hour. I haven't been in the firing-line yet, but we expect to be soon. The men are splendid, they know we are up against a big thing, but we believe England is bigger, and she can be proud of her sons. When I have done my little bit, I hope



the village won't have to be ashamed of me. You will be amused to hear that your "omen" is my stock story out here and very popular, for every one believes you are right. We are going to win, but we want all the help we can get because Heaven helps those who help themselves, so go on, Nannie dear, sticking up your notices on the Tollhouse, and get the men to enlist, tell them from me there must be no slackers, and we must not count the cost till after peace has been restored.

'With love,

Your affectionate

'GEORGE.

'P.S.—Don't let mother worry.'

EVELYN ST. LEGER.

[The entire story, of which these chapters are a part, will be published in book form by Messrs. Smith, Elder, and Co. in the course of this month.—  
ED. CORNHILL.]



